



MONTALBERT.

A NOVEL.

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MONTALBERT.

CHAPTER I.

IN one of those villages, immediately under the ridge of chalky hills, called the South Downs; where the soil changing suddenly to a strong clay, renders the country deep, and the roads bad; there dwelt, a few years since, the rector of a neighbouring parish, of the name of Lessington. In the village where he lived he was only the curate; choosing his residence there, because the house was larger and more commodious, than that which belonged to his own living three miles distant. His family consisted of a wife, two sons, and four daughters.

One of the sons had a fellowship at Oxford; the other, was a younger partner in a respectable tradesman's house in London.

The daughters were reckoned handsome ; the two eldest had been for some years the toasts at the convivial meetings in the next market towns ; the third was now a candidate for an equal share of rustic admiration, and her claims were generally allowed ; but the youngest, who was about eighteen, when this narrative commences, though she was still considered as a child by her sisters, and treated as such by her mother ; was thought by some of the few persons who happened to see her, to be much the handsomest of the four, though her beauty was of a very different character from that of her sisters.

Perhaps in these days of refinement, the imagination might be in some degree assisted, by the romantic singularity of her name ; she was called Rosalie at the request of a lady of the Catholic religion, the wife of a man of very large fortune, who sometimes inhabited an old family seat, about three miles farther from the hills : Mrs. Lessington had been for some years her most intimate friend, and accepted with pleasure her offer of answering for, and giving her name, to the youngest of her girls. Mrs. Vyvian, the daughter of
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an illustrious Catholic family, being born at Naples, had received the name of the female saint so highly venerated in the two Sicilies; and before her marriage, had lived a good deal alone with an infirm father at Holmwood House, which having descended to her mother from noble ancestors, became hers, and was part of the great fortune she brought to Mr. Vyvian.

During the solitary years when she attended the couch of a parent, the victim of complicated diseases, the society of Mrs. Lessington had been her greatest consolation. It continued so till her marriage—a marriage which she was compelled to consent to, by her father's peremptory commands. Mrs. Vyvian afterwards passed some years on the continent with her husband, and returned to England mother of three children, a son and two daughters. And whenever this family inhabited the old mansion-house of Holmwood, Rosalie passed all her time with them. When young Vyvian was about thirteen, his sisters twelve and eleven, the young ladies were so much attached to their companion, that Mrs. Vyvian, to indulge them, took her

with them to London, and afterwards to their estate in the North. Young Vyvian, the only son of the family, being sent abroad, Rosalie remained with his mother and sisters above two years, making only short visits at home. At the end of that period, Mr. Vyvian thought proper to have his daughters introduced into the world, and in a stile of life to which Rosalie could have no pretensions; she therefore returned to the parsonage, and though she could not but be sensible of the great change in her situation; her good sense, and the peculiar mildness of her disposition, enabled her, if not to conquer her regret, at least so far to conceal it, that though generally pensive, she was neither sullen nor melancholy, and entered with placid resignation into a way of life, so different from that to which she had (she now thought unfortunately, been accustomed.— Her mother, who probably remembered that she had been sensible of something like the same uneasy sensation when she bade adieu to the society of her friend, then Miss Montalbert, to marry Mr. Lessington, seemed to

pity,

pity, though she forbore to notice, the dejection which was occasionally visible in her youngest daughter, in despite of her endeavours to hide it. As to her father, he treated her as he did the rest, with general kindness, but no marked affection. Her sisters were not unkind to her so long as she affected no superiority, but seemed better pleased to be considered as too young to be admitted of their parties, than to make one, where she knew she should find no enjoyment, and they were on their parts content to leave out, as long as they could, a person who would be at least a formidable competitor for the prize of beauty. The eldest was courted by a gentleman farmer of considerable property in the county, the second by an attorney in a neighbouring town, and as these lovers were accepted, parties of pleasure were continually made for the Miss Lessingtons. Sometimes to the sea-coast; or to races or cricket matches; Mr. Lessington attended his daughters on these expeditions, till the eldest was married. The care of Miss Catharine and Miss Maria, was then left to her, and

the Vicar of Mayfield returned to the duties of his parishes, and his farm.

On these occasions, Mrs. Lessington and her youngest daughter being left alone, their conversation sometimes turned on the family of Vyvian. It was a subject of which Rosalie was never weary, though it was not always that her mother would indulge her with talking upon it. Rosalie was tenderly and gratefully attached to Mrs. Vyvian, even more than to her young friends; and frequently mentioned to her mother, how much she had been hurt at remarking, during the latter part of her stay in the family, that this amiable and excellent woman was extremely unhappy. One day when they were sitting at work together, this conversation was renewed—“ You hear nothing, Madam, (said Rosalie to her mother), of our neighbours at Holmwood Park, being to come down soon.”—“ Nothing (replied her mother, coldly); I suppose, from what Mr. Allingham said, (Mr. Allingham was the Catholic priest of the neighbouring town), that we shall not see them here this year.”—Rosalie sighed.—“ He

“ He told me (added Mrs. Lessington), that Mrs. Vyvian was so much indisposed when he saw her in town, that the physicians talked of ordering her to Cheltenham; it is more than two months since I have had a letter from her.”—Rosalie sighed again.—“ It is her mind (said she), that preys upon her frame; and will, I am afraid, destroy her.”

“ I hope not (replied Mrs. Lessington), for I think her spirits have been always much the same since I knew her. Perhaps they are not mended by Mr. Vyvian’s having renounced his religion, and by having her children brought up Protestants, contrary to his promise, when he himself changed; besides, you know he is a harsh and hasty man, positive, violent, and ill-natured enough to make a woman, like Mrs. Vyvian, unhappy, if there is no *other* cause.”

“ Ah! that *other* (said Rosalie), I have heard a great deal about it.”

“ About what?” cried Mrs. Lessington, in a tone of surprise.

“ About the—the—the lover, (replied Rosalie, blushing.) That Mrs. Vyvian was

so much attached to before she was married to Mr. Vyvian."

" I don't know (said her mother, colouring as if by sympathy), who could tell you, child, of any such foolish story."

" Nay, dear Madam, but was it not so?"

" Was it not, how? *I* really know nothing about it, and yet I believe nobody saw so much of my friend Mrs. Vyvian, as I did at that time; for though it was long after I married, I used to be almost as much with her as when we were both single."

" The gentleman is still living, Madam," said Rosalie.

" I again assure you Rose, (replied her mother, peevishly), that I know nothing of—of *any* gentleman. But I think I heard your father come into his study—Do child ask him for the key of the closet above."

Rosalie obeyed; but she well knew her father was not in his study, and saw that her mother only sent her to seek him, that she might escape from conversation, which for some reason or other, she was strangely unwilling to continue. This was not the first
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time Rosalie had remarked, that her mother solicitously avoided rec-ounting any circumstance that used to happen in her girlish days, at those periods when she was connected with the family of Montalbert: and if ever she unconsciously began to speak of Miss Montalbert, now Mrs. Vyvian, she either stopped as soon as she recollected herself, and changed the conversation, or spoke in a manner particularly guarded, and only of trifling occurrences.

“ What can be my mother’s reason? (said Rosalie, musing to herself as she went to walk in their little garden), there is some mystery certainly; surely the marriage with the man Mrs. Vyvian was so attached to, could not have been broken off on *her* account?—Impossible! for though my mother, I believe, has been a very handsome woman, she certainly never could be compared to her friend; who even now, in ill health, and half heart-broken, as she is, is much more beautiful than either of her daughters.”

Rosalie sighing when she thought of Mrs. Vyvian’s illness, and regretting that she did not this year come into the country, felt all

the cold and blank regret, which departed pleasure leaves. She wished now, that she had passed less time in the Vyvian family, where she had been accustomed to the conversation of Mrs. Vyvian, of which she was particularly fond; and to a manner of life, very different from that which she was now in—still more different, from what it was probable she would be expected to enter into, when her two elder sisters were both married: her father having lately said, half laughingly, and as if he supposed it would please her, that she should then go out with Maria; appear at assemblies, and try to get an husband too; for he wanted to get his girls off his hands as fast as he could.

Rosalie felt that she had an invincible aversion to this plan of dressing and going out in hopes of getting, as her father termed it, an husband. She was convinced, that to be addressed by such men as the husband of her eldest sister, or the man to whom the second was soon to be married, would render her completely miserable; for it seemed but too probable, that her father would not allow her a negative.

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Youth, however, dwells not long on remote possibilities—But though no acute uneasiness assailed her, the languor and dejection of Rosalie increased as the autumn came on; solitude was infinitely preferable to the society, such as was at present within her reach; but seclusion so perfect as that she was now condemned to, depressed her spirits. In every other period of her being at home, at this season of the year, her elder brother had been there also, who being very partial to her, delighted to instruct her; but now this dear brother was gone into the North with one of his college friends, and was to be at home only for a few days before his return to Oxford. She thought every body was gone to the North, for the Vyvian family were perhaps there by this time, if Mrs. Vyvian's health had allowed her to leave Cheltenham—and never had she felt so dejected and forlorn. The hill which arose immediately behind the vicarage house, afforded a view, even half way up, of a great extent of country, and Holmwood Park, the old family seat of Mr. Vyvian, though at near three miles distance, seemed to be with-

in five minutes walk. Rosalie had now a melancholy pleasure, in viewing it from the high grounds, as the setting sun blazed on the western windows, while the characters of the inhabitants were forcibly recalled to her mind.

Mr. Vyvian, a man of very extensive possessions, and the head of an ancient Catholic family, had been rather received as an husband by Miss Montalbert, because her father commanded her to receive him, than for any other reason; for so far were they from having any sympathy, that their religion was the only thing in which they agreed, and even that tie of union between them did not long exist; for soon after the death of his wife's father, he renounced the church of Rome, and going through all the ceremonies of reconciliation to that of England, entitled himself to represent a borough that belonged to him, and became a member of parliament. From that time, the tutors that had been entrusted with the education of his son, were removed; his daughters, contrary to the promise he had at first made to his wife, were no longer suffered to go to mass, or to be in-

structed

fructed by the old priest, who had for a great number of years resided in their mother's house. And Mrs. Vyvian, who was strongly attached to the religion of her ancestors, was from that period a solitary and insolated being in the midst of her family.

Mr. Vyvian was one of those men, who, naturally haughty and tyrannical, had never known, because he never would endure, the least contradiction. His temper resembled that of those reasonable beings one sometimes sees among the common people, who not unfrequently beat their children till they make them cry; and then beat them for crying. Just so he contrived to do exactly what he knew would make his wife completely miserable, and then quarrelled with her because she could not (though she endeavoured to do so most sincerely), always conceal her wretchedness. Till lately, she had found the estrangement of her daughters, who too much resembled their father, compensated in a great measure by the attentive gratitude of Rosalie, who used to pass much of her time at Holmwood, while Mrs. Vyvian was there alone, and her family remain-

ed in London. But lately she appeared to have lost all pleasure, even in visiting this favourite seat; and though when she did write to Mrs. Lessington, or to Rosalie, her letters expressed all her former regard, yet these letters became every day more rare; at length she hardly ever wrote to Rosalie; an air of languor and disquiet pervaded those parts of the letters addressed to her mother, that Rosalie sometimes saw; for it now and then happened, that Mrs. Lessington received letters which her daughter knew to be from Mrs. Vyvian, the contents of which she never disclosed, and did not seem pleased to be questioned upon them.—These Rosalie concluded were filled with the murmurs of an oppressed heart, that found a melancholy indulgence in pouring its hopeless sorrows into the bosom of an old and faithful friend; though she herself had never heard one repining sentence.

The venerable priest, now the only inhabitant, except servants of the solitary mansion of Holmwood, had been accustomed to walk over now and then to Barlton-Brook (the
name

name of the parish where the Lessington family resided); and Rosalie, who honoured his character, and knew how highly Mrs. Vyvian esteemed him, was never happier than when she was allowed to make his tea for him, or to walk with him part of the way home. During the present summer, however, these visits had become less frequent, and at length entirely ceased; a terrible deprivation to Rosalie, though none of the rest of the family seemed conscious that it had happened. Rosalie at length remarked it to her mother, who answered drily, that Mr. Hayward was probably ill. " May I not walk over some day to Holmwood, Mamma, and see how he does?"

" I do not know when I can spare you, my dear," was the reply, and the conversation dropped.

Another, and another week passed, and Mr. Hayward did not appear. Rosalie then enquired news of him, of one of those itinerant fishmongers who travel round the country, and who constantly carried his wares to Holmwood. The man assured her that he
had

had that day seen Mr. Hayward in good health. Rosalie soon afterwards discovered, but with extreme vexation, that her old friend forbore to visit her, because it had been hinted to him, that the suspicion of his influencing her on religious subjects was likely to be very injurious to her future prospects in the world: Mr. Grierfon, who had married her elder sister, and Mr. Blagham, the intended husband of the second, having declared their apprehensions of her becoming a Papist; in which opinion two young men who had very much admired her, also agreed. The sisters of one of them protesting that *she was sure Miss Rose Lessington was disposed to that religion, which made her give into such morish ways, and always to affect solitude, like nuns, and such sort of people.* Thus deprived of the innocent pleasure of conversing with a man, who from her infancy she had considered almost as a second father; a cypher at home; and rather suffered as one of the family, than seeming to make a part of it, necessary to the happiness of the rest, Rosalie had no other resource than in her own mind against the unvarying medium

medium of life. Her mother, though not more ignorant than the generality of women in middling life, had received no better education than a country boarding school afforded, which five and thirty years ago were much less celebrated for the *accomplishments* they communicated, than they are at present. Since that period, she had studied the utile, rather than the dulci. Having before her marriage lived very much in the family of Montalbert, though by no means in the stile of an humble companion (for she had a small independent fortune), she had accustomed herself to undertake many little domestic duties for the friend she loved, and after her marriage, she had a family, which kept her constantly occupied; so that never having had her curiosity raised in regard to books, and never having been accustomed to read, she had now no relish even for books of amusement; and wondered at the eagerness she sometimes heard her acquaintance express for them. It may easily be believed, that thus disposed, she had no collection of books likely to amuse her daughter; who had long since exhausted all the information

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or entertainment afforded, by an odd volume of the *Tatler*—*Robinson Crusoe*—*Nelson's Feasts and Fasts*—*Harvey's Meditations*—a volume of *Echard's Gazetteer*—*Mrs. Glafs's Cookery*—and Every Lady her own House-keeper.

The library of Mr. Lessington, though more extensive and occupying a room dignified with the name of a study, was not better adapted to beguile the solitary hours of a very young woman. It consisted solely of sermons—Polemic's—such publications as related to Questions on Infant Baptism, and Elaborate Defences of the Thirty-nine Articles—*Clarendon's History*—*Rapin*, and bad Translations of *Mezerai* and *Froiffart*—an old History of Rome, in black letter—*Josephus*—*Thomas à Kempis*—*Elucidations* of difficult Parts of Scripture—and Treatises on the Nature of the Soul. Among all these it was the history only that could attract Rosalie; and during this solitary summer, she became a tolerable historian: though she did not find it either contributed to enlarge her philanthropy, or furnish her with rules for the conduct of her life; since she flattered herself,

herself, that beings so dishonest and despicable as modern history represents, are found only in those elevated regions of human existence where it was never likely to be her lot to move.

During her frequent visits to the family of Vyvian, where that language was generally spoken, Rosalie had learned to speak French fluently; could read well, and speak a little Italian, which Mr. Hayward had taken great pleasure in teaching her. The little acquirements were, she knew not for what reason, more the objects of her sisters' envy than any other of the advantages her being with the Miss Vyvians might have given her over them. She saw with surprise and concern, that though her sisters were as little, as she now was herself, in company where to speak foreign languages could be of the slightest advantage, yet that *her* being qualified to do so, vexed and humbled them. She therefore concealed what indeed there was now little merit, and less difficulty in concealing; and having no books to read in either language, and no longer any opportunity of conversing with Mr. Hayward, she
felt

felt with infinite concern that this source of amusement and of knowledge would very soon be lost to her.

The only pleasure she now found was in drawing; in which, though no great proficient, she was far enough advanced to find herself improve very materially, by following, and continually practising the few rules she had learned. To seat herself on the turf of the down above the house, on the root of a thorn, or one of those beech trees which were scattered about the foot of the hill, and make sketches of detached pieces of the extensive landscape stretched before her; or of the old and fantastic trees that formed her shady canopy, was now become her only enjoyment; and very sincerely did she regret, and very reluctantly did she obey the summons, she too frequently received to return to the house, either to make tea for some accidental visitors of her new brother-in-law's acquaintance, or to superintend a syllabus in the summer-house. These parties calling at the parsonage, now became frequent, for this new member of the family lived in the vale, a few miles from Barlton Brook; and the.

The house of his father-in-law lay directly in the horse way to what is called in that country, "up the hills." Those hills (the South Downs), gradually decline towards the sea. On the coast, within a few years; many bathing places have been established, where the sick and the idle pass the summer or autumnal months. The variety of people thus collected, make a visit to the sea-coast, a pleasurable jaunt to the inhabitants of the neighbouring country: and Mr. Grierfon, a man perfectly at ease in his circumstances, and lately married to one of the most celebrated beauties of the county, failed not to amuse his bride and her friends with many of these tours. His future brother-in-law, Blagham the attorney, who lived at Chichester, was a great promoter of what he called "a little sociability." He gratified at once two passions; the love of what he called pleasure, and the prospect of future advantage, to which he always looked forward with peculiar earnestness. While he was bustling about with Grierfon and his wife, together with his "own intended," as he chose to call her, he was displaying his skill in ordering
dinner,

dinners, in hiring boats for water-parties; in consoling "*the ladies*," when they were sick, and "*cutting jokes upon them when they got better*." In making sure bets at Broad* Halfpenny, for "Egad, Sir, he always knew what he was about." And in hedging well at poney races; and while this went on, "Egad, Sir, he never lost sight of the main chance—not he: egad, Sir, he had all his eyes about him."

And it was true, that while thus entered into what he called "*the enjoyments of life, and a little sociability*," he made acquaintance among the ycomanry, or the few of that rank of men who are still *called* so: among men, however, who had money to put out at interest, and who employed him to find for them good securities, and to transact other matters for them. So that though a young man in the honourable profession of an attorney, and newly established in the already well-stocked city of Chichester, he was considered as very likely to make his fortune;

* A down in Hampshire, on the borders of Suffex, the resort of both counties for cricket matches.

and Mr. Leffington had, in the contemplation of such a prospect, granted him the hand of the fair Catharine, his second daughter; rich indeed only in herself—in very handsome wedding clothes, that were now preparing for her; and in her connections and acquaintance among the gentlemen's families of the county.

CHAP. II.

IT was on a beautiful afternoon towards the end of August, when Rosalie retired to her usual seat on the hill; was again engaged in her now favourite occupation. The rays of the sun declining early in the afternoon, gilt the landscape with tints more than usually luxurious. Holmwood House, its windows always lighted up when these evening rays glanced on them, was an object which, as it continually forced itself upon her observation, she almost for the first time in her life wished to escape from. Yet insensibly it brought to her mind a train of ideas—melancholy, yet not to be repelled, her pencils, and drawing cards, were laid down on the turf, while with folded arms, and her head reclined against the tree she was sitting under, she fell into a reverie. A long row of old stone pines, stretched their grotesque heads from the eastern side of the house towards a
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rising ground, where this wild and irregular avenue was terminated by an octagon temple, now falling fast to ruin ; where Rosalie remembered to have passed many hours when she was a child, the happy thoughtless companion of the little Vyvians, who used to call this old summer-house their house, and to carry thither their playthings, and make their sportive arrangements, while their governess, a little old French woman, was accustomed to sit on the steps knitting or netting. The steps Rosalie could distinguish from her solitary seat on the hill, but the playful group and their odd little guardian were gone. Rosalie recollected how happy she had been there, and already she had acquired that painful experience that had made her fear she should taste of unalloyed happiness no more. Her friend and protectress, Mrs. Vyvian, who now seemed to have deserted, from some unaccountable change of taste, the habitation she was once so fond of, appeared before her in imagination more pale and dejected than usual. She fancied she saw her slowly coming out of the little conservatory, which she had caused to be built,

and in which she took peculiar pleasure : she had a nosegay in her hand for each of her girls—and Rosalie was once received under that appellation—and she beckoned to them as she saw them walking in the shrubbery, and, with one of her pensive smiles, gave to every one her little present. The Abbé Hayward, that excellent and venerable man, met her : benignity and pious resignation were in his countenance, as he endeavoured to find some conversation that might cheer the depressed spirits of Mrs. Vyvian. She bade her daughters and Rosalie walk before them ; and, making a short tour in the plantations, seemed to remove her languor, and enable her to meet her family at supper with some appearance of cheerfulness.

Such were the scenes Rosalie was recalling to her mind, and such the figures with which memory was busy in peopling them, when her contemplations were disturbed by figures very different, who presented themselves under all the disadvantages of contrast. . . . Blagham, and two other young men, whom she did not recollect ever to have seen

seen before, came whooping and hallooing from the house, and ascended the hill towards her; as it soon became very steep, Blagham leaped from his horse and ran towards her, and the other two followed him.

“ Why, my sweet Rose, (cried he), my Rose of the world! why do you cruelly hide yourself among thorns? Only to be looked after—eh! my pretty Rose,—Aye, ’tis the way of you all:—there’s my Kate below yonder, would fain serve me the same sauce—but I’m come to drink tea with you, my dear little sister, that is to be, and to introduce two of my friends to you. (The friends by this time were come to the spot). This, Madam, is Captain Mildred of the 69th, now quartered in our town; and this, (added he, with all solemnity), this is the Rev. Philibert Hughson, a worthy clergyman, and Rector of Higgington cum Sillingbourn in this county.” Rosalie had nothing to do but to curtesy to them both: her future brother-in-law, however, had not yet done with her; but, stepping back, he made a ridiculous bow, and, in a theatrical tone, exclaimed, “ And now, gentlemen, give me the superlative
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pleasure of introducing to *your* admiration Miss Rosalie Lessington, fourth and youngest daughter of the Rev. Joseph Lessington, Master of Arts, Vicar of Cold Hampton, and Curate of Barlton Brooks in this county: a young lady, of whose personal perfections, gentlemen, I dare not speak; but who is, I may venture to say, endowed with every qualification to render the marriage state completely happy.”—Shocked and amazed at this impertinent address, Rosalie felt her cheeks glow with anger and indignation, but, recovering herself, she asked coldly if her mother had sent for her?

“She has—she has—(cried her persecutor, whom she now perceived had added to his natural impertinence all that which liquor gives when it overflows a shallow brain)—She has, fair flower of the desert, and we are the beatified ambassadors charged with the delectable commission. Come then, bright nymph!”——

He was proceeding in this style, when Rosalie, taking from him the hand he would forcibly have held, said, “I wish my mother had sent some person who was more in possession

session of his reason.”——“ Ah ! Madam, (cried the young man, who was announced as the Rev. Philibert Hughson), there are moments when reason is lost in wonder and delight, and when” ——“ What, Sir ? ” interrupted Rosalie, in a tone so unexpected, that the young divine was unable to proceed, and even blushed as he attempted to finish a speech which he probably thought was in the style of the society he was with.

As they walked down the hill towards the house she turned to Captain Mildred, who, as he had hitherto been silent, had not offended her ; and who, being an officer, she hoped was a gentleman, and entered with him into the common conversation, while Blagham, too drunk to make much speed, staggered after them, and Mr. Hughson went sidling down a little before her, as if still solicitous to attract her notice, yet half afraid of another rebuff, was trying to recall his consciousness of self-importance.— The Rev. Philibert Hughson was what is called a dapper, tight-made, little man : his face neither well nor ill, but with something in the expression of it that soon let an ob-

server of faces into his character. If the Rev. Philibert Hughson had even ventured to think, in the same unrestrained manner in which he sometimes spoke, it is very certain that he thought himself a d——d clever fellow. The second son of a very rich father, he had been a buck of the first head at Cambridge, spent four times as much as he was allowed, and contrived to get some thousands in debt. He was an excellent judge of horse flesh, and a great connoisseur in carriages: he knew the dimensions and properties of every vehicle from a phaeton to a sulky; had possessed them all by turns, and had changed them oftener than his cloaths or his friends. He had made a merit of taking orders, when he knew his careful father had bought the valuable livings of Higginston cum Sillingbourn, worth together above eight hundred a year. Nor did he determine to make this sacrifice, and, from the smartest fellow at Cambridge, sink into a country parson, till he had stipulated for the payment of his debts, and a handsome sum in ready money. He then cut off his hair, turned his green coat into a gray one, and
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resolved to be very orthodox and very good: his father, most devoutly hoping he would keep his word, complied with all his conditions, and was delighted when he had sworn he felt an irresistible call from heaven, and was inducted to the living of Higginston cum Sillingbourn. The most pleasant circumstance attending his new situation was, that this cure of souls was undertaken in the best country possible for killing pheasants, and not half a mile from him partridges were equally plenty. A pack of the best fox hounds in England were within five miles, and he had greyhounds of his own of the true Orford breed. To take advantage of all these pleasures, he had begun by fitting up and enlarging the stables, filling them with high-priced hunters, and sending to Newmarket for boys to attend them: he stored his cellars—furnished his house for his brother sportsmen who had promised to visit him—bought a new phaeton; changed it for a curricule; then imagined a new whisky of his own composing, calculated for the Suffex roads; and, in short, during the eight months that he had been in possession of the living,

had felt so many irresistible impulses, besides that which had given so valuable a member to the church, that he had already received from the friendship of his dear friend Blagham a trifling accommodation of ‘the needful’—for to apply to the old gentleman so soon was hardly discreet; parental patience, like some other virtues, being sometimes apt to wear out, if too frequently called into use.

Mr. Blagham had not been many days introduced to the Rev. Philibert Hughson, before he discovered that something very advantageous might arise from cultivating his acquaintance. He perfectly understood the way to recommend himself, and set about it with so much zeal, that he became very soon the dearest friend he had in the world. Blagham thought he could not do better than endeavour to recommend one of the sisters of his intended wife, and he had already tried to persuade his friend that he was in love with Maria, in which he would probably have succeeded, if, at a convivial meeting where the beauty of the neighbouring damsels was canvassed, some young man, who had accidentally seen Rosalie, had not warmly
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assured him, that she was the prettiest girl in the county; and when another spoke of the celebrity of her sisters, agreed that they were fine women, but assured Mr. Hughson, to whom he sat near, in half a whisper, that there was no more comparison between them and the youngest sister than between light and darkness. This had greatly raised the curiosity of Hughson, who had since pressed his friend Blagham to carry him to the house of his intended father-in-law; a request which was heard with pleasure, and immediately granted.

Equally rash and headstrong in whatever he undertook, Hughson was passionately in love at first sight, and as immediately determined to pursue the object that had thus struck him, nothing doubting her ready and even joyful acceptance of a man so unexceptionable in point of fortune, and so very clever a fellow. Under this impression he took no pains to conceal his admiration, but persecuted the distressed and reluctant Rosalie with speeches to which it was impossible for her to reply. She looked timidly towards her father for protection, but she saw, that

far from being willing to afford it to her, he seemed delighted with the attention Mr. Hughson paid her, and smiled and rubbed his hands, as who should say, " Oh ! oh ! here comes another chapman for another of my girls."—Mrs. Lessington appeared to be impressed with the same idea, and overwhelmed the little man with civility, while Maria, to whom he had before shewn a great preference, and who seemed to have been much better pleased with it, was piqued at his now addressing himself entirely to her sister, and shewed that she severely felt the mortification, but endeavoured to conceal her vexation, by laughing and talking with Captain Mildred, who, being one of those military heroes whose talents are greater in the field than in the cabinet, she found it rather difficult to keep up the gaiety she affected; for Captain Mildred, besides that his head was very scantily stocked with ideas, was too fine a man to give himself the trouble to produce the few he had to amuse a country parson's daughter. He only came with Blagham and Hughson because he had nothing better to do with himself, and had
besides

besides an inclination to buy one of Hughson's horses, which he was in hopes of getting a bargain, and which he had therefore been depreciating, and trying to put the little divine out of conceit with it; telling him that the horse, in the first place, had been strained behind, and would never stand sound; "And besides, (said he), my dear Doctor, it grieves all your friends to see you upon such a tall, long-legged animal. By Heavens! Jack Norton of our regiment called to me the other day, as you rode through East Street, and asked me who that little fellow upon the tall horse was? 'For damme, (says he), he puts me in mind of Tom Thumb upon an elephant.'"—Such was Captain Mildred, on whom neither beauty nor wit could make the slightest impression, and who, equally stupid and selfish, had every qualification for a rogue, except talents. But he had a tolerable person, a red coat, and was said to be a man of fortune; so that he had been reckoned among the misses a very charming man, and their mamas had invited him to their concerts and their card parties.

Before the tea was finished, at which Rosalie so reluctantly assisted, Mr. Hughson received from both her father and mother the most pressing invitation to renew his visits as often as he could. " And I hope, my good Sir, (cried Mr. Lessington), I hope you will not let the beginning of the shooting season deprive us of the happiness of seeing you, for, I assure you, we shall have excellent sport round about this village. I myself know of a great number of birds: I expect my son too; my eldest son, will be here shortly, and I am sure he will be greatly flattered by the honour of your acquaintance."

" I am sure he will not, (sighed Rosalie to herself); for never can a man be imagined whom William would like so little: but, alas! my father knows he is not coming."

Plans were now talked of for the next week, which Hughson spoke of as dedicated to the gun, with childish eagerness. He gave to Mr. Lessington a very long and elaborate description of a new gun he had bought, which had cost him five and twenty guineas:

not

not indeed that he wanted any such thing, for he was an admirable shot—killed nineteen out of twenty, and was reckoned as sure as any man in Norfolk. “I remember about two years ago, (said he), I went out, only I and my father’s gamekeeper, and we killed, that is, I killed, about forty brace in about five hours, for he hardly ever fired.”

“Birds were remarkably plenty I suppose,” said Mr. Lessington.

“Why no, really not so very remarkably plenty—I have seen them as much so: but, my dear Sir, Norfolk is the county for game . . . why, I have seen, Sir, of a morning, when the birds were at feed, the very ground covered with them, so that you could not have thrown a pebble without touching them—as close, Sir—as close.”——

Lessington, who by a glance from Rosalie’s eye, saw that Hughson was doing himself disservice with her by this sort of rhodomontading, saved him the trouble of finding the comparison he was seeking for, by saying, “Yes, yes——I have been in Norfolk—I know there is a prodigious quantity of game in that county.”

But

But Hughson, elevated with wine and inspired by love, could no longer check the violent inclination he always felt to relate some very marvellous story; and to make himself the hero of it, he thought it was impossible to find any audience better disposed to listen and believe, with the exception only of Captain Mildred, whose coldness he imputed to envy. He began, therefore, and told some of the most extraordinary adventures that ever were heard:—how he once, with his single arm, defended several officers of dragoons from the insults of an enraged populace, whom some of them had offended, just for throwing an old woman over a bridge into the river in a frolic.... “The old woman, (said he), swam like a cork, and was taken out not a bit the worse. My friend, Ned Whatley, as honest a fellow as ever lived, gave her a crown, and bid her not make such a d——d yelling, since there was no harm done; but there came up a parcel of fishwoman and washwoman, and the devil knows who, and presently all the town, tag rag and bob tail, were under arms, and my friends were forced to retreat to the Red Lion,

Lion, and there they shut themselves up in a room, Sir—so, presently up comes the mob, and begins to batter the door, Sir.... Oh! oh!—thinks I—are you there, my good friends? I shall have a little conversation with you, gentlemen, in a minute.... So, Sir, out I went among them all, and began to reason with them. They hissed, however, and began to be very troublesome, but that I did not mind: I seized one of the foremost by the collar; damme—(says I. I was not in orders then you know)—Damme—(says I)—*I'll* make an example of some of you. So, Sir, up comes a fellow, six feet high, and as strong as Sampson; but I seized him with the other hand, and was going to drag both him and the first rascal into the room, when up comes a great strapping wench with a red hot poker in her hand; she gave me a blow, Sir, upon my head, which cut through a thick hunting hat, Sir, and stunned me sure enough."

"And pray, Hughson, (said the Captain, with an air of incredulity), what were your friends the officers of horse doing all this while?"——"Doing?"—(answered he)——

Doing?—

Doing?—Why—why they were—they were shut up in the room; what *could* they do, you know.”

The evident fallacy and folly of such a story would not have been tolerated in any other company; but Mildred was too heavy and too indolent to confute or ridicule it; and the rest were the very humble servants of the relator, except Rosalie, who, disgusted more and more every word he spoke, was extremely glad to be relieved from hearing either his compliments or his stories; when it was proposed they should all take a walk to the top of the hill, and that the gentlemen should walk thither with them, and have their horses led. In the bustle of their departure, Rosalie left the room as if to get her hat; but having done so, she glided away, and passing as quickly as she could through a small orchard that lay on the other side of the house, she went into a copse that adjoined to it, and was presently out of hearing the inquiries that she supposed would be made for her. Perhaps her father and mother might chide her on her return to the house; but she had so invincible a dislike to
being

being exposed to the impertinence of Blagham, or the ridiculous speeches of his new friend, that there was nothing she had not rather submit to that temporary ill-humour could inflict, than to be exposed to such teasing and disgusting conversation.

C H A P. III.

THE copse into which Rosalie had thrown herself, like an affrighted bird, was very extensive, stretching along the edge of the hill, and making a curve as if to let in the few houses that composed the village ; it spread beyond into a very extensive wood, and there assumed the name of the Hunacres, probably a corruption of hundred acres. It was as wild and almost as unfrequented as when the ancient Anderidæ sought their food amidst the same entangled woods, then overshadowing the whole country under the hills.

Now, however, there were some winding paths through it made to solitary farms around, and a nobleman, to whom the greater part of it belonged, had cut ridings from the Downs towards his own house in two or three directions, to facilitate the way of the sportsman. The path along which Rosalie went was so intricate, that she forgot how far or
whither

whither it carried her, till she found it became dusk, and was stopped by arriving at one of these ridings or cuts through the wood. She then recollected how far she had wandered from home, and was turning to go back, when three gentlemen on horseback, followed by two servants, came galloping so fast from a turn in this green lane a little beyond her, that they were near her almost before she perceived them. The foremost of them checking his horse, and looking at her with some surprise, said to his companions, " Here is a young lady, who, if we are not right, I am sure will be so obliging as to direct us."

Rather wondering than alarmed, Rosalie stopped, and the gentleman who had first spoken, said, politely taking off his hat—" We are going, Madam, to Holmwood Park, which we plainly distinguished from the hill, and to which my friend here, *who ought to know*, thought he could lead us by a nearer way than that which we were directed to take; but he now thinks he has taken the wrong turning, and that we are too much to the left. Can you inform us how we can best
make

make our way out of the wood? for if we could see the house again, we could easily reach it."

Rosalie was about to answer, that the way they were in led directly to a common, which adjoined the Park at Holmwood, when the young man, of whom the inquirer had spoken, as one who *ought* to know the way to it, jumped from his horse, and exclaimed, "I cannot have forgotten you, whatever else I have forgotten during two-years absence. It is Rosalie, my dear playfellow and companion."

"It is indeed, (answered she); but, Heavens! Mr. Charles Vyvian, how tall you are grown? Upon my word, I should hardly have recollected you. How is my dear Mrs. Vyvian?—How are your sisters?"

The other two gentlemen, seeing the dialogue was not likely immediately to end, dismounted, and were introduced to Rosalie; the one as the nephew of Mrs. Vyvian, Mr. Montalbert, who, after a long residence abroad, was come to England for a few months only, on a visit to the Vyvian family: the other as the Count de Toriani, an Italian nobleman,

nobleman, to whom also the Vyvians were the more distantly related. So many and so rapid were the questions that Mr. Charles Vyvian now had to make, that he wholly engrossed the conversation, and as they slowly walked down the green avenue before them, he seemed totally to have forgotten whither he was going, or that he had any other business in the world than to converse with Rosalie as long as he could. It was now, however, so nearly dark, that she thought it would be wrong to proceed any farther.—“ I must wish you a good night, (said she) and make the best of my way through the wood home.”

“ Indeed, but you must not think of returning by yourself,” answered Vyvian.—“ Harry, (added he, speaking to Montalbert) let us go home with Miss Lessington.—Shall we not, Harry?”

Harry answered, “ With great pleasure,” and the opposition of Rosalie was in vain.

“ But we need not go down this way, surely, (said Vyvian); we may go along the path I saw you in, and so through your father’s

ther's orchard or garden, or something—I am sure I remember such a way."

Rosalie answered, that it was certainly a much shorter road, but it was only a foot-path, and that there was a stile to pass.

"Never mind a stile, (cried the young man) we will leap our horses over."

He then led the way into the path, which only allowed two persons to walk abreast. Mr. Montalbert and the Count de Torriani followed; the former murmuring loudly against Vyvian's monopoly, and the narrowness of the path.

Rosalie expected to have found her father and mother returned from their walk, and in no very pleasant humour, because she had left them; but, on entering the house through the garden, the noise she heard in her father's book-room convinced her that the party whom she so earnestly wished to avoid were not gone, but were, on the contrary, set in to drinking; an alteration of plan which did not at all surprise her, when Mr. Blagham and Mr. Hughson were of the party.

Young Vyvian, whose sole meaning was to see her safe, was however now compelled in
common

common civility to inquire for her mother and her sisters. Mrs. Lessington, amazed at his sudden appearance, received him with a mixture of civility and confusion, for which Rosalie knew not how to account: mingled with this extraordinary expression, there was also some anger towards her, and something that seemed like a disposition to reproach her for having introduced visitors so unexpected.

Mrs. Lessington expressing her surprise at seeing him, when she imagined he was at Cheltenham, or in the North with the rest of the family, he said, "The Count de Torriani and my cousin Harry, having an inclination to see Holmwood, we agreed to make a tour round the Coast, to pass about ten days at Brighthelmstone, and to make Holmwood in our way back. The Abbé Hayward had notice of our intentions yesterday, and expects us this evening. We lost our way some how by a blunder of mine, and got down into Hunacre wood, where we had the singular good fortune to meet Miss Rosalie."

To Mrs. Lessington's inquiry after his mother's health, he said, that his last letters spoke of her as being rather better. "But

it

it is (said he) more than six weeks since I have seen her, for so long have we been rambling about ; and her impatience to have me return is now so great, that I shall only stay one day at Holmwood.—Yet (added he, evidently addressing himself to Rosalie) I am at this moment more disposed than ever I was in my life to make a longer abode at our old enchanted, but not enchanting castle.” Rosalie did not seem to think any answer necessary to this, and Mrs. Lessington put on a look of great gravity and reserve, but said nothing ; and as at that moment Mr. Montalbert did not seem to find any thing to say, a profound silence ensued for a minute, which was interrupted by the noisy entrance of Mr. Lessington and his friends. The former being apprised of the arrival of young Vyvian, came to pay him his compliments ; and the others were about to depart, or at least to attempt it, though the whole party, without excepting even the master of the house, seemed to have taken such large potations, that they appeared to be but little in possession of their senses. Mr. Lessington, however, bustled up to young Vyvian, expressing the greatest delight in

in meeting him, and, amidst the confusion, Mr. Montalbert approached Rosalie, to whom he had yet hardly had an opportunity of speaking, though his eyes had declared how much he wished it. "Do you not recollect me, Miss Lessington? (said he, speaking low)—I perfectly remember you, and the days I once passed with you at Holmwood made an impression on me that never will be effaced. It has ever appeared to me since the very happiest period of the happy hours of my childhood; for I was then but a boy. It is more, (added he), than eight years ago, and you were then very young."

"You do me too much honour, (answered Rosalie); I was, indeed, very young—but (an involuntary sigh forced its way as she spoke) those were my days of unalloyed felicity; it was my golden age, and every scene has imprinted itself deeply on my memory... Yes! I well remember your coming to Holmwood—with your father, was it not?"

"Yes; and an Italian tutor I recollect, but I dare say you do not: that then I could speak very little English."

“ Why, you can’t speak much now, Sir, (interrupted a voice from behind Rosalie’s chair). I suppose by your accent, Sir, that you are a foreigner ? ”

“ You suppose, Sir, (said Mr. Montalbert angrily); and pray, Sir, who are you ? ”

“ Me, Sir ! (answered the Rev. Mr. Hughson)——Me, Sir !——Why, Sir, my name is Hughson.”

“ Well, Sir, (said Montalbert haughtily), whatever name you bear, I suppose it is not necessary for you to make a third in my conversation with this lady.” The stout, the brave, the magnanimous Hughson, he who had kept at bay an enraged populace, and protected, with his single arm, a whole corps of officers of dragoons, was, for some reason or other, appalled by the decided and contemptuous tone taken up by Mr. Montalbert. The effects of liquor vary on different constitutions. Some cowards it renders brave, and may, perhaps, render some brave men cowards. However that might be, Hughson attempted no reply ; but still, unwilling that this stranger should engross
the

the attention of Rosalie, he determined at least to keep as close to her as he could, and therefore squatted down in the window seat near her, being in truth not very well able to stand.

Montalbert, shocked at his vulgarity and impertinence, and having no idea that much ceremony was necessary towards a man, whom he supposed to be a little, dirty, drunken curate, spoke in a still lower tone to Rosalie, and what was yet more mortifying, he spoke in Italian, while, with open mouth and watery eyes, her unfortunate admirer sat gasping and staring behind her totally disregarded.

Montalbert, as well as Rosalie, had forgotten not only that he was in the room, but that any other persons were in it but themselves. From an oblivion so pleasing, however, they were soon roused by Vyvian who, disengaging himself with great difficulty from the maudling civilities of Mr. Lessington, who was very drunk and very tedious, came hastily to Montalbert and told him they must go. Vyvian then took Rosalie's hand, and sighing said, "Alas! how little I have seen of you, and *that* only by chance; can I

not come to-morrow to take leave of you, Rosalie? for you know I am going abroad again almost immediately, and who knows when we shall meet once more. Tell me, Rosalie, do you think I may call here again to-morrow?" Mrs. Lessington had by this time fiddled up near her daughter, to whom she did not allow time to reply, but, with an air most repulsively grave and formal, she said, "I am very sorry, Mr. Vyvian, it happens so, as your time is so short; but my daughter is particularly engaged to-morrow. We are all particularly engaged. It is extremely unfortunate indeed; another time I hope we shall be more lucky."

This rebuff seemed particularly mortifying to Vyvian. He bowed coldly to the mother, and then, gently pressing the hand of Rosalie, which he still held, he said in a whisper, "*I must* see you again; where are you going to?"—"I do not know, indeed, (answered Rosalie), for this is the first I have heard of any engagement. I am afraid it is on some party with these men." She could add no more, for a servant informed Mr. Vyvian and the other gentlemen that their
horses

horses were brought round. Lessington again came up, persecuting them with his civilities; and Mrs. Lessington very evidently wished them gone. It became impossible for either Vyvian or Montalbert to speak to Rosalie apart, though they appeared equally to desire it, and with reluctance, that neither could conceal, they left the house.

Blagham was no longer in a situation to be troublesome, and Miss Catharine, somewhat ashamed of the figure he made, had prevailed upon him to leave the room..... Hughson, however, to whom the departure of the strangers seemed to have restored his consequence, failed not to listen eagerly to the remarks Mrs. Lessington and Miss Catharine made upon them. "I should not have known Mr. Charles Vyvian, (said the latter). How very tall he is."

"He is tall, indeed, (replied her mother); but you may see he is a mere boy. That young man, would you believe it, Mr. Hughson, is hardly seventeen? He is the son of Mr. Vyvian, you know, of Holmwood, with whose lady I used to be so intimate. My daughter Rose used to live there a good deal

when she was a child, and this young man looks upon her as one of the family.”—— Hughson, checking a hiccup which had nearly broken the sentence, cried, “ Indeed!—really!—nothing to be sure can be more natural.”

“ Pray, Ma’am, (said Miss Catharine), who is that other gentleman; I don’t mean the foreign Count, but the other English gentleman? He is a remarkable handsome man.”

“ I am surprised dear Miss Kitty should think so, (sputtered Hughson). To my fancy now, he does not look at all like an Englishman—not the least.”

“ Why, certainly, (replied Mrs. Lessington), he can hardly be called an Englishman; for, in the first place, his mother was a foreign lady, and, though his father is an Englishman, he has lived chiefly abroad, and this gentleman has never been in England above half a year at a time, though they have a very fine seat in the North of England, and a great fortune in the family.”

“ He seems to be a very proud man, (said Hughson). I believe I half affronted him, though I am sure I don’t know what I said.”

“ I be-

“ I believe, indeed, that you did not, (said Rosalie), and you will pardon me, Mr. Hughson, if I say that you seemed to intend to affront him.”

Hughson, who had no clear idea of what he *had* said, would have taken her hand, but she snatched it away and hastened out of the room. Soon after she had the satisfaction of hearing the whole party leave the house, and scamper away with a degree of rashness which she thought must make her sister uneasy for the safety of her lover.

Rosalie, whose spirits were fatigued by the events of the afternoon, could not, however, compose herself to sleep. The sight of Charles Vyvian had recalled all those scenes which she had vainly been trying to forget, and to think of with less concern: and his manners, but still more those of his relation, Mr. Montalbert, formed so decided a contrast to those of the persons with whom it was now her lot to be associated, that she found she should, by continually making the comparison, be rendered more uneasy than ever. She saw too, by her mother's manner, that she would yet have to undergo some se-

were reproofs for having brought Charles Vyvian and his two companions home with her; and though it was easy to account for their appearance, which it must be known was merely in consequence of accidentally meeting her, yet she knew that the circumstance of her so abruptly quitting company, in which it was her father's wish that she should remain, would bring upon her reproaches that she should not soon or easily appease.

The next day verified her apprehensions. Her father ordered her to attend him in his study at an early hour of the morning, as he was going out. She entered dejectedly. Her mother was there, and both looked coolly upon her, as they bade her shut the door and sit down. Mr. Lessington thus began: "Rose, it is fit and right that you should know that you have extremely displeased me."

"I am extremely sorry for it, Sir. It was by no means my intention."

"You think then, perhaps, that it is not improper to slight my friends, and shew that you despise them—gentlemen whose notice
does

does you so much honour, and whose good opinion perhaps may be so material to you. Do you consider, girl, that you have no fortune? That a clergyman's income dies with him? That it is your business to endeavour to procure an establishment, instead of affecting these fine romantic airs?"

"I affected no airs, Sir—I obeyed your commands, and made tea for the gentlemen—I did not know you wished me to remain with them afterwards, especially as you must have perceived that they were not in a situation in which they could be pleasant company for women."

"Prudish airs!—Were not your mother and your sisters with you? and do you think I would have asked either them or you to stay in improper company?—Let me hear no more of all this, but listen to what I have to say to you:—Mr. Hughson is a young man of fortune; he is, in his family, his situation, and prospects, every way unexceptionable: he seemed to take particular notice of you, notwithstanding your rudeness to him. I expect, if this partiality on his part should go any farther, that you will dispose your-

to receive him as a man to whom it would be agreeable to me, and highly honourable and advantageous to you, to be allied."

Rosalie was about to answer, but her father, rising and leaving the room, said, with yet more sternness, " I will have no answer, unless it be an answer of compliance." Then, turning to Mrs. Lessington, he added, " you will not fail to enforce what I have said, and to impress on the mind of this young woman, that, though she has hitherto found me an indulgent father, I know how to make myself be obeyed."—He then left the room, and Mrs. Lessington said, " You see, Rose, that your father is peremptory. If Mr. Hughson.

" Dear Madam, (said Rosalie), what occasion can there be for all these menaces of anger, if I do not listen to Mr. Hughson, when it is not even known whether Mr. Hughson will ever think of me again? "

" Perhaps your father has reasons, with which he may not think proper to acquaint you, why he knows Mr. Hughson means to address you."

" Very

"Very certainly, Madam, Mr. Hughson could not communicate to my father what he could not know himself last night; for so far from being capable of thinking what he intended for the future, he knew not what he was about then: but, admitting it to be so, why must I be compelled to listen to him? Indeed, my dear Mama, this Mr. Hughson is a man it is utterly impossible for me to like."

"It would be something new, Rose, and altogether unlike the heroines whose adventures you have studied, if you should happen to like the man recommended to you by your friends, and in every respect eligible. Do not think of doing a thing so entirely out of rule, but contrive to take a liking not only to some other man, but, if possible, to the *very man* to whom of all others it is him possible you can ever be united."

Rosalie blushed deeply, without exactly knowing why. "Dear Madam, (said she), what a strange thing that is to say?"

"As strange as true, (replied Mrs. Lessington). Its truth, I am much afraid, will be

too soon verified ; but have a care, I promise you not only that nobody will defend you in this *dangerous absurdity*, but that it will be the certain means of estranging from you those friends who love you best. I won't be interrupted, (added she, seeing her daughter was going to speak), I won't be interrupted—hear me, and tell me afterwards, whether you who have nothing, you who must go into some humble business, or even, perhaps, to service, if your father should die, have any sort of pretensions to pleasing yourself, even if *the people you fancy you prefer* were indeed so foolishly inconsistent as to think for a moment of committing such a folly as taking you out of the rank you are in, which, you may be assured, child, never entered *their heads*, whatever your vanity and your ignorance of the world may have put into yours.”

“ For God's sake, my dear mother ! (said Rosalie, with tears in her eyes), what do you mean ? This is the first time you ever talked to me in this manner ! How I have deserved it now I am entirely ignorant. Did
I ever

I ever say I like any particular person?—
or——”

“ Pho! pho! (cried Mrs. Lessington, interrupting her), you cannot deceive *me*; but let me earnestly exhort you, Rosalie, never to think of the persons to whom you know I allude, but to determine to follow, like a reasonable woman, the advice of those who know better what is fit for you than you do yourself.”

Rosalie remained silent. Her soul abhorred the idea of receiving Hughson as a lover, nor could she endure that her mother should for a moment believe her capable of hesitating about him. The conversation she had held, however, was so new, and so strange, that she had not courage to defend herself; and, after a short pause, Mrs. Lessington thus went on:—

“ Did you ever know any woman who married just according to their own romantic whims in setting out in life?— Did I do it, do you think?—Did Mrs. Vyvian? ”.

“ Of

“ Of you, Madam, (said Rosalie), I cannot pretend to speak. Mrs. Vyvian certainly did *not* marry Mr. Vyvian from choice; but—has she been happy?—has not her whole life been embittered by the sacrifice she made, as I have heard, to her father’s commands? ”

“ That was very different, (said Mrs. Lessington). My friend was -----” She stopped, as she had often done before when their conversation had been led to the same topic, and then immediately changing it, said, “ But you now know my opinion, and your father’s commands. We are going to-day where you will again be in company with Mr. Hughson, and it is expected of you, that you will behave to him as to a friend of your father’s, and a gentleman whose partiality does you honour.”

“ Whither am I to go, Madam? ” said Rosalie in a dejected tone.

“ To Chichester, (replied her mother dryly). We dine with Mr. Blagham; his

his uncle is to be there with some other friends ; your sister Catharine's settlement is to be signed ; afterwards a party of friends dine with him on venison, and we shall remain there all night, perhaps go to the assembly the night after : you will, therefore, put up a small packet of clothes, and act accordingly."

From the manner in which this was said, Rosalie knew that no remonstrance against an expedition so very irksome to her would be listened to ; and that, however hateful to her, she must obey. She retired, therefore, with an heavy heart to her own room, and began to dress and to prepare for the party.

But her mother's oblique reproaches had made a great impression on her mind : she imagined they must allude to Mr. Charles Vyvian, or Mr. Montalbert ; but probably the former, as her mother could hardly suspect her of a partiality for a man she had not seen since she was ten or eleven years old. In regard to Mr. Vyvian her heart acquitted her ; but she was
at

at the same time conscious that nothing could do so great a disservice to Hughson, in *her* opinion, as putting him a moment in comparison with such a man as Montalbert.

CHAP. IV.

ROSALIE was soon ready to proceed on an expedition, from which she found no pretence would excuse her. She mounted her sister Catharine's poney with reluctance; her father, mother, and Miss Lessington, were in the post chaise; the other sister was also on horseback; and it did not add much to Rosalie's prospect for the day, that this was her sister Maria who had been put out of humour the preceding evening by the unfortunate and undesired preference Hughson had shewn Rosalie; and who, now fullen and pouting, endeavoured to shew her sister that she had not forgotten the mortification.

They had ascended and were riding along the hill, but the morning being hot and sultry, Rosalie turned her horse towards
its

its edge, where began a wood that shaded one side of it, and the ash and beech afforded a temporary screen; several roads wound up the hill from the villages below, and as Rosalie was crossing one of these she saw Montalbert suddenly appear, who, approaching her with the common salutation of the morning, rode along by her side without noticing the rest of the party.

Rosalie, conscious that this would give great offence to her father and mother, and unwilling to increase the dislike they seemed already to have taken to him from the little attention he shewed to them the preceding evening, inquired if he would not speak to them?

“Bye and bye, (said he coldly); but, good God, is it never possible to have a moment’s conversation with you?—I have a great respect for Mr. and Mrs. Lessington, because they are so nearly related to you, but you know I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with them.”

There

There was something of peculiar dejection in the manner of Montalbert as he spoke.

“ You are not well ? ” said Rosalie.

“ Not very well, (replied he) ; but the hot weather of England never agrees with me. There is something strangely oppressive in it. I don’t know whether it is that which has affected poor Charles ; but, I assure you, he is seriously ill—so ill, that we do not think of going to-morrow. The Count, being obliged to be in London, left us this morning, as it was uncertain when Charles would be well enough.”

“ I am very sorry, (said Rosalie with quickness), it will so distress my dear Mrs. Vyvian!—Has he sent for any advice ? ”

“ It were well worth while to be ill, (said Montalbert), were one sure of exciting interest so tender.”—“ But you do not answer me, (said Rosalie, affecting not to hear him). Has Mr. Vyvian sent for Mr. Harrison, the apothecary ? ”

“ I be-

“ I believe Mr. Hayward intended it, (replied Montalbert), for the poor old man was frightened out of his wits. Charles, however, opposed it. Perhaps it will be nothing. But you know that his mother has nursed him to death; and that Hayward is as timid as an old woman about him.”

“ I am very uneasy, (said Rosalie, pausing a moment). I think I had better tell my mother; she would surely see Mr. Vyvian, as she knows how very wretched her friend would be should her son be ill at a distance from her.” Thus saying, and without waiting for an answer, she rode towards the chaise and bade the driver stop. Montalbert did not go with her, but followed the chaise at some distance.

“ Well?—(said Mrs. Lessington sharply, as the chaise stopped)—and what now?”

“ Dear Madam, (answered Rosalie in visible consternation), here is Mr. Montalbert, whom I have met by accident, who tells me that Mr. Charles Vyvian is taken very ill?”

“ Well?—

“ Well?—(cried Mrs. Lessington impatiently)—and what would you have us do? ”

“ I thought, Madam, (said Rosalie, deeply blushing and speaking quick), I thought you might be alarmed on account of your friend Mrs. Vyvian, and might—might——”

“ I don’t see what *we* can do, my dear, (said Mr. Lessington). Probably Mr. Hayward has taken proper care of the young gentleman.—I suppose, (added he, addressing himself to Rosalie), since Mr. Montalbert came hither by *accident*, that Mr. Charles has not sent any message expressing a wish to see your mother? ”

“ No, Sir,” answered Rosalie.

“ Well then, child, there is *no call* for our interference: I wish him better with all my heart. Rose, you keep up with the chaise—Andrew, drive on, we shall be late.”

Andrew obeyed, and Montalbert, who had very slowly rode on while this conference lasted, stopped, as the chaise passed,
and

and made a formal bow to the persons in it, but without shewing any intention to speak to them. He then rejoined Rosalie, and continued to ride the pace she did forty or fifty yards behind the chaise, complaining of the perverseness of his fate, in her being to stay perhaps several days at Chichester; while she, in her turn, expressed very great uneasiness about Mr. Vyvian, and seemed to attend very little to the unequivocal expressions Montalbert used to impress her with an idea of his own attachment to her. At length they came into the turnpike road. Rosalie saw her father look out repeatedly, as if inquiring with angry countenance, whether Montalbert had left her, which she now entreated him to do. He sighed deeply, and said, in a mournful tone, "And so you are going to that town, and do not return perhaps these two or three days, and before that time we shall have left the country, and I shall see you no more."

This idea, which seemed so distressing to him, was by no means the pleasantest
that

that could be presented to the imagination of Rosalie. Her heart seemed to re-echo, "I shall see him no more!" But she attempted to smile, and to answer cheerfully, "O yes—I am persuaded we shall meet again."—"But when? or where? (cried Montalbert, fixing his eyes earnestly on her face). Alas! Miss Lessington, *I* shall soon leave England; and this, perhaps, is the last time we shall meet!"

"I should be *so* sorry to believe that, (answered she, hesitating and blushing), that I will not stay to hear it repeated. . . . Adieu, Sir; fail not to assure your friend of my sincere wishes for his recovery; and tell my dear venerable friend, the Abbé Hayward, how much I lament that we never meet as we used to do."

Mr. Lessington, now putting his head once more out of the window, waved his hand impatiently for his daughter to keep up with them. Rosalie understood the signal but too well, and though reluctantly, put her horse into a gallop, while Montalbert checked his more reluctantly still; but, as he

he was on a rising ground, he remained in the same place, following with his eyes the object from which he was so unwilling to part, till a wood, into which the road turned, concealed her from his sight.

Rosalie, in the mean time, proceeded with an heavier heart than she knew how to account for. The illness of Charles Vyvian, which alarmed her not only on his own account, but on that of his mother, and the certainty that she should be compelled to pass two or three days among persons so extremely disagreeable to her, were indeed reasons enough for chagrin ; but the concern she felt was something deeper than belonged to either of these. That she had seen Montalbert for the last time, she could not think of without the most acute uneasiness ; and so much did that idea dwell on her mind, that she arrived at the end of her journey hardly knowing how she got there : nor was she roused from the indulgence of these painful reflections, till the troublesome affiduities of Hughson restored her to herself, by
imposing

imposing on her the necessity of repressing his impertinence; which she did, however, with an asperity so unusual to her, that her mother severely reproved her the moment they were alone. “ Dear Madam, (said Rosalie), that man is so utterly disagreeable to me: he is so forward, so ignorant——” “ It is a misfortune to you, child, (answered her mother gravely), that you have lived in a style, and among people who have given you a distaste for those of your own rank. However that may be, (added she, with still greater solemnity), I repeat to you, Rosalie, that you are expected by your father to behave to Mr. Hughson not only as to his particular friend, but as to one whom, if you should be lucky enough to procure him for an husband, would establish you in possession of a fortune much greater than you ever can have the least right to expect.”—“ I had rather dedicate my whole life to the most humiliating poverty, Madam, (answered Rosalie with spirit); I had rather not only go to service, but submit to the most laborious

VOL. I. E offices,

offices, even to work in the fields, than condemn myself to become the wife of Mr. Hughson."

"Very fine, indeed, (said Mrs. Lessington), very romantic, and very sublime. But hear me, Miss Rose: if you are weak, wicked, and vain enough to think, for a moment, of that simple young man Charles Vyvian, which I fear, I greatly fear, that proud coxcomb Montalbert has been putting in your head, know that the most remote hint given of any such——such an absurd and——and ridiculous idea, sent to my friend Mrs. Vyvian, would not only put an eternal bar between you, but would for ever ruin you in her good opinion."

"I think of Mr. Charles Vyvian, Madam, (said Rosalie), no otherwise than as the son of my dear benefactress!—No, indeed, my dear Mama, I never was quite so absurd as to have any other idea!"

"Take care you never *are* then, (replied her mother), and be not so blind to your own interest, or so deaf to the dictates
of

of common sense, as to throw away, by refusing Mr. Hughson, an opportunity that may never offer again." Then, perceiving her daughter was about to answer her, she added, "Let us have no more romance, Rosalie, it will answer no purpose, but to irritate your father without changing his resolution. You will dress for dinner. To-morrow there is to be an assembly; it is already settled that we are to go; and, as it is the first time you have been seen there, I desire you will look as well as you can."

"Gracious Heaven! (exclaimed Rosalie, as soon as her mother had left her), I am thus to be dressed up, and offered like an animal to sale; and my mother seems to think it a matter of course. Oh! Montalbert, how different are your manners from those of the people I am condemned to live among!—Dear and amiable patroness of my happy infancy, little did you imagine, when you were so tenderly kind to your unfortunate Rosalie, that you were laying up for her future

years insupportable mortification!—Had I never been blessed in your society, had I never known those who are related to you, I should not now be perpetually making comparisons so much to the disadvantage of persons among whom it is my lot to live, and I should then have been as happy as my sisters.”

Very heavily for Rosalie passed the day. Mr. Hughson was sometimes extremely troublesome; but finding her still cold and repulsive, he now and then tried what could be effected by changing his battery, and affecting to neglect her for her sister, who, in her turn, put on a disdainful air, in evident resentment of the preference he had lately shewn Rosalie, who so little desired it.

It was not, however, in the eyes of Hughson that she appeared the fairest of the rural nymphs from ‘under the hills.’ Others of Mr. Blagham’s acquaintance, who were of their dinner party, made the same discovery, and two of them attempt-
ed,

ed, during the afternoon, to engage her for the ball of the ensuing evening. She refused them both civilly, but positively.

“ Aye, (said one of them, in a whisper), I see how it is—Hughson is the happy man; is it not so, Miss Rose? ”

“ If you mean, Sir, (answered she coldly), that Mr. Hughson’s happiness is to arise from dancing with me to-morrow, I assure you, you are mistaken.”

“ What, you are not engaged to him then? ”

“ No, Sir; nor shall I engage myself to any body.”

“ Hey!—(cried Hughson, rising and skipping across the room)—Hey!—what’s all that?—who talks of engagements?—Hey!—why, I hope, Miss Rosalie, nobody has been pretending to take away my partner; surely you understand, Ma’am, that you are engaged to me? ”

“ Indeed, Sir, I do not, (replied Rosalie), and, I should be sorry you understood it.”

“ There!—(cried one of the young men who came from a provincial town in another county),—there! I have still a chance. Sir, (added he, addressing himself very solemnly to Hughson), I’ll tell you what **is** a rule with us—that is with our ladies—and you know what excellent, genteel, fashionable meetings we have at _____. Sir, it is a rule among the ladies of _____ never to engage themselves to a gentleman in a black coat, while they have a chance of being asked by any other, and damme if I don’t think they’re in the right.”

“ *You* think, Sir, (said Hughson, colouring violently and trembling with passion); and pray, Sir—I say—Sir, that is—was there any question asked as to what you, Sir, think, Sir? ”

“ I beg, (said Rosalie, who had no inclination to have a quarrel begin between these two coats of different colours on her account), I beg that the conversation may drop; I have no intention, Mr. Hughson, of dancing at all.”

“ Oh !

“ Oh! (cried the young man, his opponent), the whole room will rise, by G—, against such an inhuman resolution. . . . No, no, that will never be allowed.—Here, Blagham, before you sit down to cards, you dog you, come and set this matter to rights for us.”

“ I beg leave to retire from the discussion then, Sir, (said Rosalie rising), though I cannot imagine how either you, or Mr. Blagham, can be interested in a matter so immaterial to you both.”

“ Eh! (cried Blagham)—why, my Rose of beauty, you have all your thorns about you to-night. Aye! aye! Sir, thus it is—thus it is—thus do these imperious little divinities treat us till they are married . . . Why now, there’s my Kitty as great a tyrant as that little lioness her sister; but you see she begins to look tame and demure already. Come, come, Miss Rose, frowns do not become the fair, child.”—He was proceeding in the same style, when, her patience being entirely exhausted, she

snatched away her hand, which Blagham endeavoured to hold, and left the room.

Before she returned the card tables were adjusted, and Mr. and Mrs. Leffington, who dearly loved a game at whist, were settled with Blagham, who really had, and Hughson who fancied he had, great skill in the game. Rosalie, therefore, seeing her too persecutors employed, and her father and mother deeply engaged, took out her work and sat down behind Mrs. Leffington, as much out of sight as possible: but this peaceful state she was not long suffered to enjoy. The idle man who remained insisted on making a party for a round table, and with whatever reluctance Rosalie was compelled to join them, and to be listening for three mortal hours to the sad attempts at wit which a commerce table never fails to produce.

At length, however, the evening ended; and for Rosalie the following arrived but too soon.

Dragged

Dragged to a scene, where she considered herself exposed as an animal in a market to the remarks and purchase of the best bidder, it was with extreme reluctance that Rosalie entered the ball-room; nor had she by any means taken that pains to add to the attractions of her person which her mother had insisted upon. The simplest and neatest muslin dress, without feathers, flowers, or ribbands, was all she put on; while her sister Maria came down as showy and blooming as ribbands and rouge could make her.

Mrs. Lessington would have reproved her youngest daughter for having thus neglected her admonitions; but, when she saw the three together, she could not help being sensible that Rosalie looked like a girl of fashion, while Catharine and Maria had the appearance of people dressed for the performance of strolling plays, with all the finery the property man could furnish. Without any remonstrance, therefore, she was suffered to go with the rest; but not so easily did she escape from the renewed

importunities of Mr. Hughson to dance with him, who having engaged her father to interfere in his favour, she received so peremptory an order to accept him, accompanied by looks so angry and menacing, that she was compelled, though with extreme reluctance, to submit. Her sister on the point of being married was of course taken out by her lover, but by some mortifying fatality Miss Maria was unasked; and the first dance was nearly ended, when, to the extreme surprise of Rosalie, who with her skipping partner was arrived at the bottom, she saw (almost doubting the information of her eyes) her sister Maria standing up with Montalbert.

The change of her countenance, when it was her turn to take hands with him, expressed more forcibly than words could have done her astonishment. Montalbert perceived it. “ You rather wonder to see me here ? ” said he.—“ Wonder ! (cried she)—Good Heavens!—and your friend, how does he do?—He is certainly better since you could leave him.” The figure

figure of the dance now obliged them to separate; but in a few moments declining to go down the dance, which was soon after over, Montalbert seated himself by her, taking without any scruple the place of her partner, whom she sent away for some negus. “ You inquire after my friend, (said Montalbert), with an interest so tender, that, however I may envy his happiness in exciting that interest, it becomes me to satisfy your inquiries : yet you might, perhaps, obtain more satisfactory information from himself.”

“ From himself! (cried Rosalie eagerly); is he here then ? ”

“ Alas! (answered Montalbert, again deeply sighing), he seems insensible of the good fortune which I would purchase with worlds, if I possessed them, for there he is conversing with Lady ——, and Lady Anne ——, at the other end of the room. Shall I go and tell him, Madam, (added he coolly), that you desire to see him ? ”

“ By no means, (replied Rosalie), by no means—not for the world ! ”

“ Insensible fellow ! (cried Montalbert), whom rank can a moment detain from Miss Rosalie Leffington. Ah ! if he saw with my eyes—if his heart felt as mine does ! ”——

“ I am very glad, however, (said she, affecting not to understand this), I am extremely glad to find Mr. Charles Vyvian so much recovered ; I was quite alarmed at his threatened illness on account of his mother.”

“ On account of his mother ! ” repeated Montalbert.

“ Yes, Sir, (said Rosalie gravely), certainly on account of his mother.”

At this moment two persons of very different description approached them. . . . Hughson came smirking and prancing with a glass of negus, and began telling how he had mixed it after a manner peculiar to himself ; but seeing that Rosalie gave no attention to him, and that Montalbert made

no offer to resign the place he had usurped, he remained looking even less wise than ordinary, till his dismay was increased by the appearance of Vyvian, who, putting him on one side with very little ceremony, entered into conversation with Rosalie, who expressed as warmly as she felt it the pleasure his recovery gave her. She loved Charles Vyvian exactly as she loved her brothers: brought up with him from her childhood, she had never considered him for a moment in any other light, nor did she suppose it possible, notwithstanding what her mother had said, that any other person could entertain an idea of his having for her any other attachment than that which might subsist between a brother and a sister. Vyvian was fourteen months younger than she was, and nothing could, in her apprehension, be more absurd than to suppose Vyvian, not yet eighteen, would see her in any other light than she thought of him. This gave to her manner towards him an ease which she was far from feeling when she conversed with Montalbert; and

and now, without any hesitation, or indeed any apprehension of impropriety, she rose from her seat, and walked with him to the end of the room, Montalbert taking his place in silence on the other side, while the luckless Hughson drank up himself what he had fetched for his partner, and then went with a rueful countenance to find at the sideboard below something more powerful to dissipate the chagrin he felt, as well as the awkward sensations of conscious inferiority. Rosalie, in the mean time, not thinking about him, was inquiring of Charles Vyvian why he prolonged his stay in the country, when he was well enough to go? “ I thought, (said she), I thought you told me, that Mrs. Vyvian did not even know of your intentions of being at Holmwood. If she should hear of your remaining there on account of illness, ’tis so far from advice, I cannot imagine why you stay.”

“ What would you think, (replied he in a low whisper, as if he was solicitous that his cousin might not hear him)—what would

would you think, Rosalie, if I were to tell you, that I went thither in the hope of seeing you; that I linger here for no other reason than because I cannot prevail upon myself to quit the country where you are?"

"I should think, (said Rosalie hesitating), and I should say, that I was very sorry Mr. Charles Vyvian should talk so wildly and improperly - - - - -." She was proceeding, though she hesitated, blushed, and was evidently disconcerted, when she was interrupted by her mother, who, coming towards her, said, with more appearance of anger than she had ever yet shewn, "Why is it, Rose, that you thus quit Mr. Hughson!—I am astonished at your rudeness, child, and *must insist* upon having no more of such behaviour."—Mrs. Lessington then seized her hand, and giving it into that of Hughson, said, with a sort of convulsive laugh, "Here, Sir—I am sure Rose will be happy—he! he! he!—to go down the dance with you—
I am

"I am sure she does not wish to be left out of this dance."

Hughson then, endeavouring to smile and smirk in order to conceal the extreme vexation he felt, advanced to take her hand; but, from some unusual courage which at that moment she felt, some sudden impulse for which she could hardly account, and which she afterwards thought blameable, she snatched away the hand. Hughson would have taken, and telling him disdainfully that she did not know that she should dance any more, she turned to the seat she had before occupied, whither Vyvian, wholly regardless of the evident anger of Mrs. Lessington, followed her.

Hughson, swelling with rage and resentment, which he had, however, no means of satisfying, now seemed to give up the point in absolute despair; but, accustomed as he had been to fancy that so clever a little fellow, with his fortune and expectations, might have his choice among the
young

young women of a whole county, he could not repress the mortification he felt. The plan that Montalbert had adopted of dancing with Maria Lessington, in order to obtain the opportunity of conversing with her sister, had been so far from answering, that it had entirely baffled his purpose. He now saw himself engaged for the evening, and prevented from enjoying a moment's conversation with Rosalie, while his more fortunate cousin was happy enough wholly to engross her attention.

Montalbert, however, who had seen too much of the world to be easily diverted from his design, made a false step as he was going down the dance that was now begun, and protesting he had hurt himself so as to make his going on impossible, was limping to a seat; but seizing on poor Hughson in his way, he cried, " My good Sir, I perceive your fair partner declines dancing any more; I am, most unfortunately for myself, disabled—It will be happy for
you,

you, for you will have the pleasure of taking one lovely sister instead of the other."

Hughson, clever fellow as he thought himself, was so over-awed by the easy manners and conscious superiority of Montalbert, that he had nothing to say, but advancing towards Miss Maria, as if this was an arrangement to which he was under the necessity of submitting, they fully finished the dance together; while Montalbert, availing himself of the success of his stratagem, seated himself on the other side of Rosalie, who, however unwilling to disoblige her mother, forgot in a few moments that she was likely to do so, while she attended sometimes to Vyvian as to a brother whom she loved, or as to a very young man whose wild fallies were pardonable; but to Montalbert she listened with sensations very different: she knew far less how to repress the oblique declarations he made to her—declarations which she trembled to listen to,

to, while she felt conscious, though not daring to own it to herself, that all the future happiness of her days depended on their sincerity.

Mrs. Lessington had retired to cards after her last sharp remonstrance to her daughter, and the eagerness with which she always pursued her game, kept her in another room for some time. At length, however, she was either put out of the game by rotation, or some evil-disposed persons had whispered to her what was passing among the dancers; for about an hour and an half after her last rebuke she returned to the ball-room, and, in a voice and manner more angry than before, told Rosalie that she was going home, and should take her thither at the same time. "As to your sisters, (added she, laying great emphasis on her words), as *they* know better how to behave, I need not interrupt their amusement—*they* shall stay as long as they please."

Rejoiced

Rejoiced to be released on any terms from a repetition of reproaches in a public room, she assured her mother that she was quite ready to attend her. "Very well, Miss, (replied Mrs. Leffington)—it is mighty well. Come, Sir, (continued she, turning to Charles Vyvian), as we are old acquaintance, you know, you shall favour me with your arm—but stop—I must beg that you will first be so good as to accompany me to the top of the room, I must speak to Catharine and Maria."—Without waiting for an answer from Vyvian, she took his arm, and led him away.

"My blessings on your dear Mama! (said Montalbert, smiling half maliciously)—how kind she is to me—but the moments are precious—tell me, I do beseech you, Rosalie, is it impossible for me to see you again before I leave this country—before I leave England—for years!"

"How is it possible?" answered Rosalie, hardly knowing what she said.

"It

“ It would be possible, (replied he), if you would only try to oblige me.”

“ O no! no! (cried she with quickness), pray do not think of it; it would be utterly improper if it were not impossible.”

“ Do you rise early? (said Montalbert, disregarding this faint repulse)—Do you never walk before breakfast?”

“ Why will you ask?” answered Rosalie.

“ Because, as I shall certainly quit Holmwood House after to-morrow—as I cannot again importune you—as I shall probably—ah! too probably—never see you again, let me entreat you only to see me for one half hour before I go?”

“ I cannot indeed, Sir! (answered she). To what end would you ask, what I am sure you would think it very wrong were I to grant?”

“ But if I am in the neighbourhood of your house, early on the morning after
to-

to-morrow, I might have a chance of saying adieu for the last time? ”

Rosalie did not reply, for her mother was by this time returned, and sharply bidding her follow, went hastily to the hired chaise that waited for them.

CHAP. V.

VERY bitter were the reproaches which Rosalie was compelled to hear during their way home. She bore them with patience and silence, conscious perhaps that they were not wholly unmerited ; she was, indeed, willing enough to acknowledge that she should not so rudely have repulsed Hughson in positive disobedience of her father's commands ; but why her mother should make her conversation with Charles Vyvian so great a crime, she could not imagine, since in fact she had shewn a much greater disposition to converse with his cousin than with him, and was perfectly conscious that she gave him no other preference than what arose from the long intimacy, that being so much together in childhood, had created between them. . . .

On

On this conversation, however, it was that Mrs. Leffington dwelt with acrimonious repetition—protesting to her daughter, that if Mrs. Vyvian were acquainted with the impropriety, folly, and disobedience she had been guilty of, that her favour would be forfeited for ever.

After listening to such sharp reproaches, intermingled with many assurances of the anger and resentment of both her parents, unless she behaved in a very different manner to Mr. Hughson, Rosalie obtained with some difficulty leave to retire, when the image of Montalbert was the only one that she found rested forcibly on her mind: his conversation made a deeper impression the more she reflected on it. Montalbert was not only the most elegant and agreeable man she had ever conversed with, but he appeared to her to be the most unlikely man in the world to amuse himself with the cruel; yet too frequent folly of making professions that mean nothing. Montalbert therefore loved her. An idea so soothing acquired new power to charm her

her in proportion as she reflected on all he had said, and the manner in which he said it. How fortunate would be her destiny, should she become the wife of such a man, and how was it possible that her mother, who must see the marked preference he gave her, could hesitate a moment between him and such a man as Hughson. It was true Mr. Montalbert was a Catholic, but of what consequence was that?—Was not her mother's earliest and best friend of the same persuasion?—Such were some of the contemplations which engrossed the thoughts of Rosalie, and, fatigued as she was, kept her from repose till she heard the whole party return. Loud mirth, which echoed throughout the house, declared the joyous hearts of the company. Rosalie particularly distinguished the boisterous laugh and horse-play of Blagham, and the idiot-like chuckle of Hughson. Rosalie delighted to have escaped this conclusion to the evening, and fearing that her sister, who shared her bed for that night, might either be elated with

the amusements of the latter part of the evening, or not yet have recovered of the ill-humour she had felt at the beginning of it as to enter into conversation with her, either to testify her pleasure or vent her ill-humour, Rosalie affected to be asleep. The next morning was fixed for their return home.

At breakfast every body affected to resent to Rosalie what had passed the evening before ; and while Mr. Lessington regarded her with evident marks of displeasure, and would not speak to her, while her mother, still more angry, talked at her, and encouraged Blagham, in his strictures on the company who were at the assembly, to ridicule the two travelled men, who were, he said, the greatest coxcombs he ever recollected to have seen—to which Hughson very warmly assented, casting at the same time a look of resentment at Rosalie, as if to say, “ Yet you, Miss, preferred these men to me ? ”

“ For my part, (said Blagham), by the Lord, if I had a sister who preferred such
Frenchified

Frenchified chaps to honest Heart of Oak Englishmen, why I send her off to be a Signora or Mademoiselle among them—I should think such a bad taste a disgrace to my family. To be sure, in regard to these two fine gentlemen, they being Papists is reason enough for *their* being educated among your Seniors and Monseers; but what the use is of sending our young nobility and gentry to learn a parcel of useless coxcombry amongst them, I never could discover; and I own, Sir, (addressing himself to Mr. Lessington), that when I consider this matter, I cannot but think that the Legislature of our three kingdoms ought to interfere."

Before Mr. Lessington, who never spoke without due consideration and emphasis, could return an answer, Miss Maria said, "Oh! there they go!"

"Who go?" inquired her mother.

"My sister Rose's great and fine friends, (answered Maria), Mr. Vyvian and Mr. ———, I forget his name, that very finest of all fine men,"

Rosalie, who had seen them as well as her sister, could not help blushing. Montalbert had looked earnestly in as he passed, and checked his horse a moment when he perceived he had caught her eye.

“ I hope, (said Mrs. Lessington austere-ly), that Mr. Vyvian is returning immediately to his mother, who is extremely ill, who knows nothing of his being here, and who would be extremely unhappy were she to be informed of it. It was but the day before yesterday he was ill in bed, (added she, casting a significant glance at her youngest daughter), and last night he was at a ball.”

“ He did not dance; however, Madam, (said Rosalie), and I understood came hither only to consult a physician.”

“ Who informed *you* of all this, Ma'am, (answered her mother), and why do *you* take upon you to answer for him? ”

Rosalie, whose conscience was perfectly clear in regard to Vyvian, answered calmly, “ He told me so himself, Madam, and

I an-

I answered, because I thought your conversation addressed particularly to me."

"Humph—(said Mrs. Lessington contemptuously)—silence, child, would often become you much better."

The other young ladies had a great deal to do in the town, for Miss Catharine was now to be married in three days. Mantua-makers and milliners were therefore to be hurried, and, as soon as breakfast was over, they went out together for that purpose, attended by Blagham and Hughson, while Rosalie remained where she was, having no ambition to accompany them; her preparations for her sister's wedding were confined, (as it was intended that Maria only should accompany the bride), and 'about these she was by no means solicitous.

Disagreeable and uneasy to her as the remonstrances and reproaches were that she was still obliged to hear, she flattered herself that one good effect would arise from the circumstances of the preceding evening—that Hughson, convinced of its

inefficacy, would carry his suit no farther, and that his pride would prevent her being teased with addressees, which her sister seemed disposed to receive favourably.

But in this hope she was disappointed. The admiration Rosalie had so universally excited, while her sister had been hardly noticed, the whispers of approbation that he had heard from the most fashionable set in the room, for whose opinion the whole country around had the most implicit deference, as well as the impression she seemed to have made on Vyvian and Montalbert, were altogether circumstances so far from deterring Hughson from pursuing her, that they served only to inflame his ambition; and, though he affected to direct his attention towards Miss Maria for a while, in hopes of piqueing Rosalie, he soon renewed those expressions of affection and protestations of unwearied perseverance, from which Rosalie foresaw so much persecution and trouble.

As Hughson was to perform the marriage ceremony between his friend Blagham
and

and Miss Kitty Lessington, he went back with the family, and by his troublesome affiduities, and ridiculous attempts at gaiety and wit, deprived her of the satisfaction she would have derived from having left a place so very disagreeable to her as the provincial town where they had passed the last three days. At home she at least hoped to enjoy the solitude of her own room, but she dared not ask herself, whether she ought to venture the meeting Montalbert had so earnestly solicited. She felt all its impropriety; then endeavoured to reconcile herself to a step from which she thought no evil consequence could possibly arise. “ My mother, (said she, arguing this point with herself), my mother will never forgive me, should she know it—but how will she know it?—and what real harm is there in it?—It would certainly have a bad appearance, were a young woman known to have private meetings with any one—but what *meetings* can I have?—Is not Mr. Montalbert immediately going back to Italy, and is there

any probability of my ever seeing him again?—Ah! no.”—The argument concluded with a deep sigh, but it had not helped to determine her from an almost intuitive sense of propriety, for she had received but little instruction on such matters; she was conscious that she ought not to go out with a view of meeting Montalbert: yet to think that she had seen him for the last time, to let him go with impressions of her having a predilection in favour of such a man as Hughson, of her being happy among such society as she was condemned to, it was impossible to determine on it. Sleep the ensuing night was driven from the pillow of Rosalie by these debates; but it was at this season, long before day appeared with its first dawn, however, she left her bed, for it would very soon be necessary to determine whether she would venture to commit such an impropriety as meeting Montalbert, or suffer him to depart under the impressions he would carry with him, if she saw him no more.

His

His dejection when he spoke of immediately leaving England, his respectful manners, the warm and lively affection he seemed to have for her, the advantageous light in which his honourable addresses appeared to her, all contributed to dispose her to meet him; against it there was only that internal sense of prudence, (which, like the voice of conscience, could not be entirely stifled), and the fear of offending her mother. Yet why should her mother be offended?—Considered in every way, whether as to fortune, rank of life, family, or prospects, there could, she thought, be no comparison between Montalbert and Hughson; and if to have her married well was the wish of her parents, why should they be angry at her not declining an acquaintance which seemed likely to end in an establishment above their hopes. There was some truth, but more sophistry, in the arguments she used with herself to conquer her remaining apprehensions; when, having determined to venture, since it could be but for once, she left the house,

and, trembling and looking behind her at every step, hastened through the heavy dews and gray fogs of a late October morning to the copse where she had first unexpectedly met Vyvian and Montalbert, and where he had told her he should be very early on this morning, the last of his stay in the country, in hopes of her giving him an opportunity of taking a long leave of her.

As she had usually been a very early riser, and frequently walked to some neighbouring village, or farm-house, before the rest of the family were risen, the servants and labourers, who saw her pass, took no notice of it, and she had crossed the orchard, and traversed the first copse with the swiftness of an affrighted fawn, before she gave herself time to breathe. The gloomy quiet of every object around her, the heavy gray mists that hung on the half-stripped trees, their fallow leaves slowly falling in her path, had something particularly awful and oppressive: she could hardly draw her breath, and her heart
beat

beat so violently that she leaned against the stile that in one place divided the wood. "Whither am I going? (said she); to meet a man, who till a week since was a stranger to me! How am I sure that he will not despise me for this easy compliance; perhaps I shall forfeit his good opinion—perhaps—surely it were better to retreat." There was, however, no longer time to hesitate, for at the end of the path before her Montalbert appeared. He sprang forward eagerly the moment he saw her—"This is very good, dearest Miss Lessington, (cried he); how infinitely I am obliged to you!"

"And now, (said Rosalie, collecting all her resolution), let me not risk my mother's displeasure by staying long; but receive, Sir—receive my sincere good wishes for your health and happiness, and suffer me to bid you adieu!"

"Good Heavens! (replied he), and will you already leave me?—No, Rosalie, our time is precious, and I will not throw it away in a profusion of words: I love you,

and am sensible that on you alone depends the happiness of my future life. I will not, however, deceive you: I am a younger brother; and though the fortune of my family is very considerable, much of my expectations depend on my mother, who is a native of another country, who has hardly ever been in England, and who dislikes the customs, the manners, and, above all, the religion of this; with a great number of prejudices, which contribute but little to the happiness of her family, nor, I fear, to her own; she has, however, always been to me an affectionate, if not a tender mother, and it would be equally ungrateful and impolitic, were I to act in absolute defiance of her known wishes. Yet, surely, a medium may be found—without incurring her displeasure, I may escape the misery of resigning the only woman I ever saw, with whom I wish to pass my whole life.”

“ I do not see how, (answered Rosalie, trembling and faltering). No, Sir; however flattered I may be by your good opinion,

opinion, I entreat you to think of me no more, otherwise than as a friend. The obstacles between us are insurmountable, and -----”

“ Not if you do not make them so, Rosalie, (interrupted he). Hear me with patience: Though you may think my mother’s known aversion to my marrying an English woman and a Protestant, together with the state of my fortune, sufficient reasons for refusing immediately to unite your destiny with mine—yet surely you need not therefore refuse to remove the fear, the tormenting fear, of losing you, by promising that you will not give yourself to another, at least till I have attempted to conquer the obstacles that oppose my happiness. O Rosalie! if you had any idea of the agonies I feel, when I think that while I return to Italy in the hope of finding a remedy against the perverseness of my destiny, the object of my affections may be the wife of another—even of this Hughson, on whom it seems
to

to be the resolution of your family to throw you away."

"If it be any satisfaction to you, Sir, (said Rosalie in a low voice), to know that Mr. Hughson can never be more to me than a common acquaintance, I most positively assure you of it."

"I am persuaded you think so now, (answered Montalbert with vivacity); but who shall assure me, Rosalie, that you can always resist the importunities, the commands of your father; family convenience, and what is called the voice of prudence, and all those motives that may be urged to enforce your obedience? Besides, if you should have resolution enough to dismiss this man, how many others are there who may have the same pretensions? No, nothing can give me a moment's peace, unless you promise me, loveliest of creatures, that you will await my return from Italy—that you will then be mine, if the obstacles now between us can be removed."

"On

“ On so short an acquaintance, can I, ought I, to promise this?” replied Rosalie with increased emotion. She then, though in broken sentences, and in a faint and low voice, urged all the reasons there were against her forming such an engagement; but Montalbert found means to convince her of their fallacy one by one, till at length he extorted from her the promise he demanded. He insisted on being allowed to cut off a lock of her hair, and on her taking a miniature of himself which he drew from his pocket, and which he owned had been drawn in London for his mother. He then told her that he should write to her, and that she must find some means of their securely corresponding. This Rosalie declared was quite impossible; but while he was pressing her to reflect farther, a loud voice was heard in the part of the wood adjoining to the orchard, calling on Rosalie. Terror now seized her. “ It is my father, (said she). If he finds you with me, what shall I not suffer!—

suffer!—leave me—leave, me for Heaven's sake!”

“ You terrify yourself needlessly; it may only be a servant sent to seek you.”

“ And why to seek me, (replied she), if there was no suspicion of my being improperly absent? It is not usual for them to inquire or call after me.”

Montalbert now saw her so affected with apprehension, that he would not longer detain her; but kissing her hand, and pressing it a moment to his bosom, he told her he would find the means of writing to her, and disappeared, while Rosalie, endeavouring to recollect and compose herself, took the path that led towards home.

CHAP. VI.

HAD it indeed been Mr. Lessington himself, who had thus loudly summoned his daughter to return home, it would have been difficult for her to have concealed from him the agitation of her mind, notwithstanding her utmost endeavours to compose herself; but it was only Abraham, a servant who was occasionally bailiff, coachman, footman, groom, or whatever was wanted in the family, who, approaching her out of breath, cried, "Lord, Miss, I've been ever so long looking a'ter you Why, here a been all on em looking for your coming; for what d'ye think?"

"Indeed, I don't know," replied Rosalie, breathless, and terrified at this preamble.

"Ah!

“ Ah! Miss—Miss!—you can’t guess whose come?”

“ No! no! Abraham—do pray tell me?”

“ I’ve a good mind not, for your giving me such a dance after you. (Abraham had seen her grow up from infancy, and was no observer of forms). However, I’ll tell you for once: ’tis both our young masters; ’tis Mr. William from Oxford, and Mr. Francis from London—both—both on um be comed to be present at the wedding, and a rare time we shall all on us have on’t I warrant too.”

“ I am very glad, indeed, (said Rosalie, relieved from a thousand apprehensions of she knew not what). I thought my brother William would not be here till to-morrow, and as for Frank, I did not know he was expected.” She then hastened into the house, and in meeting her brothers, particularly the eldest, to whom she was much attached, the embarrassment of her manner was not remarked, nor was any inquiry made where she had been.

It

It was not till she retired to dress for dinner that she was at liberty to reflect on all that had passed with Montalbert. The promise she had given seemed to be a relief to her spirits, when she remembered that it should make her consider herself as betrothed to the only man in the world whom she preferred to all others; that she had now the best reasons in the world to strengthen her resolution, never to listen to Hughson; reasons, which if she dared plead them, her father himself could not disapprove. She ran over in her mind every look, every sentence of Montalbert, and sincerity and tenderness seemed to dwell upon his tongue. What but real affection could induce him to speak, to act as he had done? and what could be so fortunate as her inspiring such a man with a passion such as he professed to feel for her. A consciousness of attractions, which till very lately she never suspected that she possessed, gave her a momentary pleasure; but she felt that those attractions would
have

have been without value, had they not secured for her the heart of Montalbert.

Soon dressed for the day, she sat in the window of her bed chamber, pensively looking towards the quarter where Holmwood House was situated, though she could not distinguish it. "He is gone! (said she). Already he is on his way to London; in a few days after he arrives there he will leave it—will leave England—the sea will be between us!" She took out the picture he had given her, and, for the third time since it had been in her possession, fixed her eyes earnestly upon it. The candour and integrity of the countenance struck her particularly. "Never, (sighed she), can the heart that belongs to these features be otherwise than generous, tender, and sincere." She was thus feeding the infant passion which had taken entire possession of her mind, and was lost in thought, holding the picture still in her hand, when her elder brother opened the door. "Are you dressed, Rosalie? (said he),

he), and may I come in ? ” — “ O yes ! yes ! brother, (answered she, hurrying the picture into her pocket), pray come in . ”

“ I have a great deal to say to you, my dear Rose, (said he); come, give me a place in the window by you. You are very much improved, my love, since I saw you last ; I don't wonder at the havoc you make ; but my mother complains of you, Rose . ”

“ On what account, my brother ? I am sure I never intentionally offended my mother . ”

“ But she tells me that you have now an opportunity of marrying extremely well, but that from some unaccountable perverseness, or unreasonable prejudice, or perhaps, (added he, fixing his eyes earnestly on hers), perhaps through some unhappy predilection, you drive from you, with contempt and disdain, a man every way unexceptionable . ”

“ You have seen him, brother, (answered Rosalie), and can tell whether you think

think him all that my mother has represented."

" I have only seen him for a moment, and have hardly exchanged ten words with him. His person is neither good nor bad, but surely my sister has too much sense to refuse a man merely because he is not an Adonis."

" But indeed, brother, it is not that. Mr. Hughson is a man, whom it is impossible I can ever like: he is silly, noisy, and conceited; a boaster, and a sort of man whom I know will displease you when you see more of him. I dare say his fortune is greater than I have a right to expect; but I never saw a man more likely to spend a fortune than he is, and I cannot think there is much worldly wisdom in marrying a man with whom I might enjoy a short affluence, that would only make me feel more severely the indigence he might reduce me to."

" All that is very well, (said William Lessington); but tell me, Rosalie, what
do

do you say as to this prepossession in favour of another, of which my mother accuses you?"

"I can say nothing, (replied she), because I—because I know that—indeed I do not know who she means."

"Is there no such predilection existing then, Rosalie?"

"Not for the person my mother thinks of," answered she, colouring still higher.

"You allow there is for some other then?"

"Not at all—I am sure I did not say any thing like that; but if there were, why, my dear brother, should it of necessity be in favour of a person who would disgrace my family?"

"There may be very improper attachments, Rosalie, (replied he very gravely), which may not be disgraceful in the usual acceptation of the word: as, for example, if a young woman should be flattered into a partiality for a *boy* of a *different* religion, and in whose power it could never be to fulfil any promises which a childish passion might

might induce him to make. (The completion of Rosalie changed to a deeper scarlet). I see how it is, my sister, (added he), and will now distress you no farther; but I trust to your own sweetness and candour to give me an opportunity of discussing this matter when we are both more at leisure. I believe dinner is now ready."

" Before you go, my dear William, (cried Rosalie, recovering herself a little), let me assure you, that my mother has no grounds whatever for her suspicions, but because Mr. Charles Vyvian has appeared particularly pleased at our meeting, and what was more natural? We were brought up together from children. As to myself, I certainly did the other night find more pleasure in talking to my old friend, whose mother I love so much, and am so much obliged to, than in dancing with Hughson, who is the most disagreeable man in the world to me—perhaps I might be rude to him—I am afraid I was; but why
would

would my mother compel me to dance with him? ”

“ And is *that* all, Rosalie? ”

“ That is all, upon my honour, (replied she), in regard to Mr. Vyvian.”

Young Lessington, who did not know Montalbert even by name, appeared satisfied, and they went down together; when, from the beginning of the dinner, conversation, and the quantity of wine that Hughson very soon swallowed, Rosalie flattered herself that long before the close of the evening he would do or say something that would thoroughly disgust her elder brother, and, by convincing him that she was right in refusing him, procure for her a defence against the irksome importunity of his future addresses.

In this she was not mistaken; before young Lessington had been two hours in company with Hughson, he was compelled to own that Rosalie could not be blamed for having kept at a distance a man whose manners were so unpleasing. The other brother, however, who had seen very dif-

ferent company, and whose ideas had taken quite another turn, thought of him as he did of himself, that he was "a clever, sprightly, little fellow."

Dinner was hardly over, and the bottle going as briskly about as it could do before the ladies retired, when Abraham came stumbling into the room, and muttered something which nobody understood, and, before there was time for inquiry, Mr. Charles Vyvian and Mr. Montalbert entered, to the displeasure of some of the company, and to the astonishment of Rosalie, who, on meeting her brother's eyes, looked so confused, that all the suspicions Mrs. Lessington had hinted to him in the morning seemed to be confirmed. The reception they received was cold and formal, particularly from Mrs. Lessington, who gravely expressed her surprise, after what Mr. Vyvian had told her, at his making so long a stay in the country.

"Oh! (answered he), I was so unwell yesterday, that my good old doctor would not hear of my setting out to-day; and,

as

as my mother thinks we are still upon the ramble, and will not be uneasy, I have persuaded my worthy old Abbé to say nothing about it: however, we intend to be good boys, and to go off to-morrow; and, upon my honour, (continued he, rising and taking her hands), my dear Mrs. Lessington, I only came to know if you could not give me some little commission to my mother, to put her in good humour with her truant boy Come—come—I know you will oblige me with a letter—or—you, Madam, perhaps, (turning to one of the other sisters)—if not, I am sure Miss Rosalie will.”

The repulsive gravity with which Mrs. Lessington answered him, was but ill seconded by the increasing confusion of her daughter, who hesitated, blushed, and stammered out a few incoherent words; symptoms which did not escape her brother, who narrowly watched her, and who failed not to impute it all to a very different motive than the real **one**.

Montalbert, in the mean time, was on thorns ; surrounded as she was, there was no possibility of speaking to her, and he could not bear to leave her without having fixed on some means by which they might hear from each other. He recollected that none of her family understood Italian : he looked round to see if it was likely any one in the room did, and being soon convinced he had nothing to apprehend, unless it was from the Oxford man, and even with him he thought the chances were much in his favour, he told Rosalie, addressing her with great gravity, that since he had the pleasure of seeing her, he had recollected the words of the Italian song she had mentioned, and that, if she would favour him with a pen and ink in the next room, he would write them out.

At this moment the mistress of the house, receiving an hint from her husband to depart, said, as she rose from the table, " We will send you one down, Sir."—" O no ! (replied he), rather let me write it, dear Madam,

Madam, in your apartment ; and, Vyvian, as we must immediately return home, we will now wish Mr. Lessington and his friends good night." This short ceremony passed with great formality on all sides, and Vyvian and Montalbert following the woman of the family into another room, the latter sat himself down with great solemnity to write out his song, which having done in the plainest Italian he could imagine, but written as if it was in measure, he gave it to Rosalie ; and Vyvian, who had been talking earnestly to her the whole time, reluctantly took his leave also, and they both departed.

They were hardly out of the room before Mrs. Lessington, whose anger and suspicions were roused anew, demanded to see the paper Montalbert had given her. Rosalie, not without fear and trembling, delivered it to her. She looked at it a moment, and believing from the manner in which it was written it was really a song, gave it her back again, not without evident marks of displeasure, and

many hints of her resolution to inform Mrs. Vyvian where her son was, and of the impropriety of his conduct, if he did not leave the country the next day. Of all this, as Rosalie was not obliged to think it addressed to her, she took no notice.

The next day the wedding of her second sister and Mr. Blagham was celebrated. The party were more noisy and disagreeable than is even usual on such occasions. Hughson was the most drunk, and consequently the most impertinent; and never was an hour so welcome to Rosalie as that which took them all away, by the favour of a full moon, and left her alone with her mother.

Till now the tumult, with which she had been surrounded, had not allowed her a moment, except those allotted to repose, to indulge reflections on what had passed. The sudden calm that succeeded was calculated to restore her dissipated and bewildered thoughts. Her mother, busied in arranging her house, left her to herself; her father had accompanied the bride and
 bridegroom

bridegroom to their house, and was afterwards to go on a tour with them into the eastern part of the county. It was at once a matter of pleasure and surprise to Rosalie, that he had never once proposed her being of the party, and she remarked that he now appeared much less anxious than her mother to promote with her the suit of Mr. Hughson; it seemed as if he would have been as well contented that his daughter Maria should ensure this important conquest.

Mr. Lessington was one of those men who have just as much understanding as enable them to fill, with tolerable decency, their part on the theatre of the world. He loved the conveniences of life, and indulged rather too much in the pleasures of the table. His less fortunate acquaintances (a race of people to whom he was not particularly attached) knew that Mr. Lessington was not a man to whom the distressed could apply with any hope of receiving any thing but good advice. Those who were more fortunate had for

the most part a very good opinion of Mr. Lessington. If he was exact and somewhat strict in enacting his dues, he was also very regular in the duties of his office ; and if he did not feel much for the distreffes of the poor, he never offended, as some country curates have done, the ears of the rich, by complaints which those who *overlook* the labourers in the vineyard are always so unwilling to hear. He had brought up a large family respectably, and every body concluded he had some private fortune, besides the two or three thousand pounds he was known to have received with his wife. He kept a post-chaise ; not, indeed, a very superb and fashionable equipage, but very well for that country : his cart horses drew it, but they were sleek and well trimmed, and Abraham, trussed up in a tight blue jacket, and his broad cheeks set off by a jockey cap, made a very respectable appearance as conductor of a vehicle which gave no inconsiderable degree of consequence to its owners in a country thinly inhabited by

by gentlemen. Mr. Lessington was the most punctual man imaginable at all meetings of the clergy, where he did equal honour to the sublunary good things that were to be eaten, and the spiritual good things that were to be listened to. He had an high idea of his consequence in the church, and was a violent opposer of all innovations; against which he had drawn his pen with more internal satisfaction to himself than with visible profit to his bookseller. His works, though he read them with extreme complacency, by having, through want of orthodox taste in the modern world, the misfortune to be, according to a term most painful to the ears of an author, *shelved*.

This, however, affected Mr. Lessington less than it would have done many authors: for he wrote less for literary fame, or literary profit, than to recommend himself to certain persons who so greatly dreaded any of those impertinent people that dare to think some odd old customs might

be altered *a little* for the better ; that nothing would, he knew, be so effectual a recommendation to the favour of these dignitaries as zeal, in stopping even with rushes the gaps threatened by such innovators, even before they were visible to any but the jealous eyes that saw, or fancied they saw, the whole fence levelled. The prosperity of his family might be considered as being in some degree the effect of his thus keeping always on the right side, for he was reckoned a rising man, and one who would at no very remote period be promoted to higher dignities. Mr. Blagham had not been entirely without considerations of this sort, when he married a wife with no other portion than her wedding clothes ; but Mr. Lessington had promised her something handsome at his death, and there was no doubt in the mind of the lawyer of his ability to fulfil his promise.

Mrs. Lessington and Rosalie had now been at home alone three days. The
former

former had settled her house, and was quietly enjoying the order she had restored after all the bustle they had lately been in ; while Rosalie, with mingled emotions of fear, anxiety, and doubt, waited for intelligence from Montalbert.

It was in the evening of the third day, that as she was walking in a sort of court, that was before the house next a road, an horseman stopped, and inquired if this was not the parsonage ? On Rosalie's answering in the affirmative, he produced a letter, which he said he had been sent with from Lewes.

The predominant idea in the head of Rosalie being Montalbert, she trembled like a leaf when the man gave her the letter, and, without considering whether it was likely her lover should send it thus openly, or how it should come from Lewes, she hastened breathless into the house to obtain a light to read it by, for it was now nearly dark. In her way to the kitchen she was met by her mother, who seeing her extreme agitation, and a letter in her

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hand,

hand, for she had not had presence of mind to conceal it, immediately fancied it came from Charles Vyvian, who was always haunting her imagination. In this persuasion she took it from her daughter, and carrying it immediately to a candle, found—not a billet-deux to Rosalie, but intelligence of a very different nature—it was a letter from Mr. Blagham, informing her, after a short preface, that Mr. Lessington died that morning in an apoplectic fit.

Though nothing was more likely than such an event, from the form and manner of life of her husband, it had never once occurred to her as possible. The shock, therefore, was great, and the widow's grief not a little increased by the reflection, that their income arising from church preferment was at an end.

Rosalie felt as she ought on the loss of a parent ; but as it was more to the purpose to endeavour to assuage her mother's sorrow than to indulge her own, she gave her whole attention to that purpose. Mrs.
Lessington

Leffington was too reasonable to be a very inconsolable widow, and in a few hours was in a condition to consider what ought to be done, which Rosalie set about executing, by writing to Mr. Blagham, and giving such orders as her mother thought necessary.

CHAP. VII.

IT is not necessary to relate all that passed in the Lessington family, till the period when all its members were assembled to hear his will read. It was then found that he had given his widow, for her life, a third of all he possessed, which amounted in the whole to about eight thousand pounds, and divided the rest among his children, to each of whom he allotted a certain portion to be paid at a certain time, except to Rosalie, whose name was not even mentioned in the will.

All expressed their surprise at this except Mrs. Lessington, who said nothing in answer to their exclamations of wonder. Rosalie, indifferent as to fortune, of which she knew not the want or the value, was no otherwise grieved at this strange omission,

sion, than as it proved her father's total want of affection for her—a conviction that cost her many tears; nor were those tears dried by the remark she made on the behaviour of her sisters and her younger brother, who all seemed pleased, though they affected concern. The behaviour of her elder brother, however, would have given her comfort, could she have conquered the painful idea, that her father had thrown her off as a stranger to his blood. As soon as the funeral was over, her brother William took occasion to talk to her alone. “Be not so dejected, my dear Rosalie, (said he); unpromising as your prospects appear, you have at least the consolation of knowing that you have always a friend in me, who will never forsake you.”

“You are too good, dearest William, (replied the weeping mourner); but do not imagine that it is the want of my share of my father's little property that grieves me—no; if he had but *named* me with kindness, I should not have been so unhappy;

happy ; but when I think that he must certainly have died in anger with me, that either from my seeming to refuse Mr. Hughson, or some other cause, he was irritated against me."

" If you reflect a moment, my sweet sister, on the date of the will, you will see that this could not be. The will is dated above three years since, when the very existence of such a man as Hughson was unknown to him, when you were only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, when you had been more with Mrs. Vyvian than at home, and when it was every way impossible that you could have given him the least offence ; I rather think that this strange circumstance arose from the opinion he entertained, that Mrs. Vyvian would provide for you."

" How could my father think that, (said Rosalie), when he must have known that Mrs. Vyvian, notwithstanding the large fortune she brought, has not even the power to hire or discharge a servant, and is hardly allowed enough yearly to appear

as her rank requires, least, as her cross tyrant of an husband says, she should squander his fortune on begging friars and mummers of her own religion? She had, indeed, a settlement of her own, but I heard him reproach her with having disposed of it in some such way; but, however that may be, my father must know that it was not in her power to do any thing for me. Of late too, he must have thought that it was not her wish, for she has appeared almost entirely to have forgotten me."

"There is, however, no other way of accounting for the circumstance, and the more I reflect on it the more I am persuaded that this is the truth."

Rosalie, though far from being convinced by the reasoning of her brother, was consoled by his tenderness, and by degrees regained her serenity, which was, however, again disturbed by a letter from Montalbert, in which he renewed all the professions he had made on their parting; told her he had continued to postpone his
journey

journey to Italy for some time longer, and had done so only in the hope of seeing her again.

He did not seem to have heard of her father's death. She knew that her being left destitute of fortune would make no alteration whatever in his affection; the little she would in any case have possessed could never indeed have been any object to him, even if fortune had ever once been in his thoughts. She wrote to him, therefore, of what had happened; and without affecting to deny the partiality she felt for him, and lamenting the little probability of their meeting properly, submitted it to him, whether it would not be more prudent to forbear meeting at all till there was less danger of offending her mother. She told him, that of the future destination of the family she knew nothing; but that, from what she could learn, her mother had some thoughts of taking a small house in or near London, when the period came on which she must quit their present habitation.

Rosalie

Rosalie now found herself for a while relieved from the irksome importunities of Hughson, who was obliged to be absent. Her mother too seemed to have relaxed a good deal in the earnestness she had formerly shewn on this subject, and had not her extreme uncertainty, in regard to Montalbert, been a constant source of anxiety, she would at this period have tasted of more tranquillity than had long fallen to her share.

Sometimes when her brother William, who continued at home, was either instructing her as the kindest tutor, or amusing her as the tenderest friend, her heart reproached her for her insincerity towards such a brother, and she was half tempted to relate to him her engagement with Montalbert; but when she had nearly argued herself into a resolution of doing this, her natural timidity checked her: she recollected how material it was to her lover that their engagements should remain a secret; and she was besides deterred by the fear that her brother would,
from

from education and principle, in all probability, strenuously oppose her becoming the wife of a Catholic.

But naturally ingenuous and candid, it was impossible for her so well to dissimulate, but that Mr. Lessington saw there was something more on her mind than she ever ventured to express. The impression that his mother had given him of some attachment between her and young Vyvian frequently returned to his recollection, though he thought it could be only a childish passion on the part of Vyvian, who would think no more of it after he left England, he dreaded least the spirits and health of Rosalie might suffer, as he had seen so often happen to young women, who had been incautiously led into listening to vows and promises that were meant by the men that made them only as the amusement of an idle hour.

In his frequent conversations with his sister, therefore, and intermingled with the lessons he sometimes gave her, he found opportunities continually to hint at

the weakness and danger of attending to such sort of professions; while, at other times, he took notice to say, how generally unfortunate marriages turned out to be where the parties were of different religions, giving Mr. and Mrs. Vyvian as an example immediately within their own knowledge. On these occasions he fixed his eyes on those of Rosalie, and, sure that he meant more than he expressed, her countenance betrayed her consciousness; for whatever her brother said, when he remotely alluded to Vyvian, was equally applicable to Montalbert, and whatever resolutions she sometimes made, when she was alone, to avow ingenuously the truth, these hints entirely deprived her of the courage she had been thus trying to obtain.

Montalbert, who by means of a servant at Holmwood House, on whose fidelity he could depend, continued to write to her and to receive her letters, became now impatient to learn where was to be
her

her future residence. As this seemed still uncertain, he implored leave to come down incog. to the neighbourhood of Holmwood ; than which, he said, nothing was more easy, as he could be concealed in the house of a farmer, a tenant of Mr. Vyvian's, who, being a Catholic, was entirely devoted to his service, and of an integrity on which he could rely. Rosalie, however, extremely alarmed at such a proposal, urged so many reasons why it should not be executed, and assured him it would make her so extremely miserable, that he, for that time, consented to relinquish it, which he consented to with less reluctance, when she informed him, that within a few days her mother had talked in more positive terms of their immediate removal to London, or to its neighbourhood ; that her brother was gone to look for a house for them, and she thought it extremely probable, from the impatience her mother expressed, that they should there begin the new year. Rosalie was
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at a loss to comprehend by what means Montalbert prolonged his stay in England so much beyond the time, when he had told her, his mother expected his return to Naples, where she generally resided; this surprised her still more, when she found by part of a letter from Mrs. Vyvian, which Mrs. Lessington read to her, that Charles Vyvian was already gone. The sentences of the letter which her mother chose to communicate ran thus :—

“ I have determined, in order to be near Dr. W——, without residing immediately in London, to take an house at Hampstead, and my upholsterer informs me he has found one that answers my description. Mr. Vyvian has, in his cold way, assented to my engaging it, taking care, however, to let me understand, at the same time, that he thought my not being well or able to live in London was a mere whim, and that the air of Hampstead was not at all better than at his house in Park Lane, or even so good. Till now I did not know he had taken an
house

house in Park Lane, instead of that in Brook Street; but, alas! my dear old friend, there are many other reasons, besides the difference of the air, that will make me adhere to my intention of going to Hampstead. It is an unpleasant circumstance surely to be a cypher in one's own house, and such I am become; now that my son, my dear Charles, is gone, I feel that there is nobody here that is at all attentive to me. The Miss Vyvians, young as they are, are introduced into the world by their father, or their father's friends: the countenance of a mother seems not necessary to them; they are fumed, I believe, with spirits to enjoy all the pleasures of gay life, and seem to fear, from me, that interruption which certainly it is not my intention to give them. The eldest, though not yet sixteen, her father thinks of marrying to a man of high rank, with whom she got acquainted while she was with her father's sister in Yorkshire. He has not, however, the title to which he is to succeed; but his uncle, whose
 heir

heir he is, is old and without children, and having some political connection, I know not what, with Mr. Vyvian, it is by them that this union is proposed, while the mother of the young man, who has an immense fortune in her own disposal, has hitherto shewn a disinclination to the match, in the persuasion that my daughter is still a Catholic. I have learned these particulars from persons who are in their confidence, which I am not, and I easily comprehend that this intended connection adds a strong reason to many others why the father and the daughter would be quite as well pleased if we saw no more of each other, during the winter, than we have done for these two last summers. Do not, however, grieve for me, my dear Catharine; you know my sufferings, and you know how I am enabled to bear them. From Mr. Vyvian why should I expect kindness? I am thankful that my lot is not yet more bitter than it is. It would be a great pleasure to me; should your affairs allow you to settle in the neighbourhood

VOL. I. H bourhood

bourhood where I have determined, for the present, to fix my residence. I am, as you well know, no great judge of such matters; but, I believe, from all the inquiries I have been able to make, that you would not, in point of œconomy, find the difference so great between living near London and in a country town as you may perhaps imagine; at least not to a family, which would not, I imagine, enter much into the card-playing societies of the village, but would live a good deal retired, though, considering your two unmarried daughters, you could not, perhaps, be quite such a recluse as I shall be, who, except my nephew Montalbert, whose stay, however, in England will not be long, shall probably live for weeks together without seeing any body but my confessor."

"The rest of the letter, (said Mrs. Lessington, as she put it into her pocket), is of condolence, and so forth, on Mr. Lessington's death."

"And

" And is there no other mention of me in it ?" said Rosalie.

" No, not any other, (answered her mother coldly); but what, does that make you sigh ?" :

" Indeed it does, Ma'am, (answered she); for how can I help lamenting that Mrs. Vyvian, who used to love me so, seems, and indeed has long seemed, entirely to forget me."

" O, when she sees you again, she will recollect her former partiality for you. You know that my friend is so wrapped up in a particular set of notions, and such an enthusiast in her religion, that she thinks it a very wrong thing to be much attached to any body, and endeavours to wean herself from all affections that may prevent her giving up her whole heart to God; and really, considering the way in which her family treat her, I really think it is extremely fortunate that her tender heart and weak spirits have taken that turn; otherwise to be treated, poor

dear woman, as she is, to have such a husband, and such children, would certainly break her heart."

"Though her daughters, (said Rosalie gravely), are certainly very unlike what she could wish them, I believe her son is dutiful and affectionate—I never saw any thing wrong in him."

"*You* never saw, (repeated her mother)—I dare say—it is very becoming in *you*, to be sure, Rosalie, to enter on his defence. I wish I may be mistaken, but I am much afraid that her son will no more contribute to her happiness than her daughters: however, the boy is gone now, thank God, and at least will not give her the *fort* of uneasiness she would have felt, could she have known of his behaviour while he was here."

"What behaviour, dear Madam?" said Rosalie, who wished to know the extent of her mother's suspicions.

"What behaviour—why, did he not talk a great deal of nonsense to you?—

Did

Did he not pretend to make love to you?"

"No, upon my word, (answered she); he said a great many civil things, and foolish things, if you please to call them so, but nothing that was at all like making love to me."

Mrs. Lessington then put an end to the conversation, by saying, that as he was now gone abroad for some years, it did not much signify what boyish nonsense he had talked, since it had gone no further; and Rosalie left her, well pleased to find from what she had said that her intention of removing her family to Hampstead was confirmed by this letter from her old friend, and that she meant almost immediately to put it in execution.

In a fortnight afterwards, all their arrangements being made, they departed for ever from a part of the country where Mrs. Lessington had resided above seven and twenty years, or rather from her na-

tive country, for she was born not far from Holmwood House. She left it, however, with much less regret than people usually feel on quitting a spot to which they have long been habituated. Miss Maria—or, to speak more properly, Miss Lessington, for she was now the eldest unmarried sister, was pleased with a change which offered her a prospect of seeing London, where she had never been for more than two or three days.

The Abbé Hayward, dismissed by Mr. Vyvian from Holmwood, had now left that venerable edifice to servants. The way of the Lessington family to the next post-town lay through the park; as Rosalie passed this scene of her former happiness, a thousand mournful thoughts crowded on her recollection, but she consoled herself with the thoughts of being soon near Mrs. Vyvian, and that she was going where, since Charles Vyvian would no longer be there to alarm the
vigilance

vigilance of her mother, she hoped to be allowed the innocent pleasure of conversing with Montalbert, without the necessity of contrivances that she felt to be unworthy of both.

CHAP. VIII.

MRS. Vyvian arrived at the house she had taken at Hampstead a few days after the family of Mrs. Lessington had become inhabitants of that village. The description of the first meeting between her and her old friend may be given best in Rosalie's own words to Montalbert ; whom, it was agreed, should not appear immediately on their arrival. " At length I have seen her, my friend—this dear Mrs. Vyvian—so nearly related to you, and therefore dear to me—the first and best friend of my childhood ; for I never recollect having received so many proofs of affection from my mother as from her. Ah ! Montalbert, how is she changed since I saw her last ; yet it is but a little while, not yet two years ; but trouble, as she said

laid with a melancholy yet sweet smile,
 makes greater havoc in the constitution
 than time. I do not know, Montalbert,
 whether it is her being so nearly related
 to you, or the memory of her past kind-
 ness, or both, but to me there is an at-
 traction about Mrs. Vyvian that I never
 was conscious of in any other person.
 The eminent beauty she once possessed is
 gone, and its ruins only remain, but the
 delicacy, the faded loveliness of her whole
 form, is, perhaps, more interesting than the
 most animated bloom of youth and health.
 She had not spirits for the first two days
 after her arrival to receive us all. My
 mother only was admitted to see her.
 Yesterday, however, my sister and I were
 allowed to attend her at an early hour of
 the afternoon. Maria was going to the
 play with a family who live here, who are
 distantly related to the husband of one of
 my sisters, and who imagined, and perhaps
 not without reason, that to make parties
 for us to visit public places is the first
 kindness they can shew to some of the
 family.

family. Only Maria, however, accepted this invitation, for I had hopes of passing the evening with Mrs. Vyvian; a pleasure I would not have exchanged for the most brilliant spectacle that London offers.

“ How can Mr. Vyvian treat this charming woman with coldness, even with cruelty, as I am afraid he does, though my mother says she never complains?—How is it possible that her daughters can neglect her?—Were I her daughter, I think it would be the greatest happiness of my life to watch her very wishes before she could express them, and to relieve that languor which always seems to hang over her spirits, and cloud the brilliancy of an understanding naturally so good. But I have heard, Montalbert, she was compelled to resign the man to whom she was attached, and to marry Mr. Vyvian, who, though he knew her reluctance, was determined to persevere. Strange that there can be found a human being so selfish as to act thus, and then treat with cruelty the victim

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tim whom he has thus forced into his power. I hope I shall never again see this man, for I feel such an antipathy to him that it would really be painful to me. As to the young ladies, I find they are frequently to visit their mother, but I shall avoid them as much as possible, for they are so much changed since we played together as children of the same family, that there is no longer any affection probably between us—I shall be despised as the daughter of a country curate; and though, I hope, I am not proud, I do not love to be despised. Ah! Montalbert, it is your partiality that has, perhaps, taught me to feel this sensation more than I ought to do. The little rustic thinks that she is preferred by Montalbert, and forgets her humility..

“ I thank you, most sincerely thank you, for your forbearance. Believe me, a little self-denial now will greatly accelerate the security with which we may see each other hereafter. My mother has so little idea of your having any partiality to me, that

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she seems quite easy now Charles Vyvian is gone, and, except that she still thinks I have done extremely wrong in refusing to encourage the addresses of Hughson, she seldom dwells on what is passed. From present appearances, my dear friend, it seems as if we should be fortunate enough to pass a few tranquil and pleasant hours in the society of each other before you go to Italy; alas! they will be but transient—for yesterday, Mrs. Vyvian, in speaking of my drawing, and recommending to my mother to procure me a good master, she said, ‘When my nephew, Montalbert, goes back, as he must now do very soon, since I find his mother is become very impatient at his long stay, he shall send over some chalks and crayons, for Rosalie, much better than can be found in London.’—If either of them had looked at me, at that moment, they would have remarked, that I did not hear with indifference the name of Montalbert, but fortunately I escaped observation, and soon recovered myself.

“It

" It is long, very long, since any circumstance has given me such pleasure as being restored to my beloved benefactress, yet she says little to me ; she makes no professions of that kindness towards me, which, I believe, has not been lessened even by our long separation ; but there is an affection in her manner which I cannot describe. She is civilier to my sister than to me ; but she addresses her as Miss Lessington, while she calls me Rosalie. I recollect that it is *her* name, and it seems in *her* mouth to have peculiar charms.

" I have passed, perhaps, too much time since I left her in reflecting how happy I might be, could I be related to this dear woman without opposition from the more near relations of Montalbert. You have often told me, that you love her as a mother, though only the half sister of your father. The sweetness of her manners, even that weak health, and that air of pensive sorrow, which her own children, at least her daughters, seem to consider

consider as the effect of bigotry or unforgivable humour, make her to me an object of tenderer attention. O Montalbert! what delight it would be to me to soothe the hours which are embittered by matrimonial discord, and, I fear, by filial neglect.

“ Yet, while I think thus, perhaps I am continuing a correspondence with you, that may be displeasing to her, that may add to her solicitude, and deprive her of the satisfaction of seeing her nephew married to a woman of equal rank and of his own church. This reflection is extremely bitter to me, and it occurs the oftener, because I see with what alarm she thinks of her son’s making any other alliance than what his father would chuse for him; though it is very certain that ambition only will govern him, and that, in regard to religion, she cannot, if Mr. Vyvian dictates, be gratified.

“ I shall hardly hear from you, Montalbert, again, before you will be here. As I now expect you, I shall not, I think, betray

betray myself when we meet.—Till then, my dear friend, farewell ! ”

That she was totally destitute of fortune gave not a moment's concern to Rosalie ; dependent wholly on her mother, and likely, in case of her death, to be left wholly destitute on the world, since the share she had of Mr. Lessington's fortune was to go to her other children at her decease, she felt not the least uneasiness as to pecuniary circumstances, but, with easy faith of youth, trusted that the attachment of her lover would save her from every distress, and that before she should be deprived of her surviving parent, whose life was apparently a very good one, she should be the wife of Montalbert.

He now saw her almost every day, for as he had always been very attentive to Mrs. Vyvian, there was nothing remarkable in his frequent visits to her ; nor was it strange that he should renew his slight acquaintance with her friends.

Miss Lessington, whose acquaintance increased every day, had continual invitations

tions to stay at the houses of some of them for several nights together. Rosalie failed not sometimes to receive the same kind of compliments, but she generally declined them, saying, that she could not leave her mother alone : but, in fact, she had no wish to mix in those societies, or to enter into those public amusements, which gave so much pleasure to her sister. While Maria, apprehensive of the superior elegance of Rosalie, shewed a visible disinclination to her joining these parties, and gradually discouraged her friends from giving these invitations, by observing, that her sister was of a very reserved turn ; that she had formed connections in a very different sphere of life from the rest of her family ; and that it was merely giving her the trouble to find excuses, to invite her to scenes or society for which she had a decided repugnance.

In a very short time, therefore, the attornies and brokers wives, to whom Mr. Blagham had introduced the family, forbore to attempt engaging a young woman who

who they imagined gave herself airs, and was extremely proud and reserved.—Miss Lessington was left in undisturbed possession of all the admiration the set of men that belonged to these “worshipful societies” had to bestow, and Rosalie at liberty to pass her time in company much more agreeable to her.

Her mother, less refined, and loving cards rather too much, was not equally difficult as to her companions; though she had really as much affection for Mrs. Vyvian as she was capable of feeling for any body, she could not help being sometimes sensible of a want of variety. Her friend’s piety and estrangement from the world made her, as good Mrs. Lessington sometimes thought, rather respectable than amusing, and instead of such long visits from her confessor, Mrs. Lessington secretly wished for another, that they might *make up a rubber*. Insensibly she became acquainted with some “mighty agreeable people” in the village, who never played
high,

high, but were happy to make a little snug party just to pass away the long evenings. One of these parties introduced a second, a second a third, till Mrs. Lessington could hardly spare one in a week to pass with her friend Mrs. Vyvian, who, when Rosalie was with her, seemed, however, to be scarce sensible of the absence of her mother.

But from that unfortunate prepossession received early in life, that to deny herself the most innocent gratifications were sacrifices acceptable to Heaven, Mrs. Vyvian frequently abstained from indulging herself with the cheerful conversation of Rosalie, who then, as her mother was so frequently out, and now went occasionally to London for two or three days among her own and her eldest daughter's friends, was left at home, and the visits of Montalbert were uninterrupted, and without inquiry. To be continually in presence of a beloved object, to see or suppose that his attachment every moment becomes stronger,

stronger, to listen to arguments to which the heart yields but too ready an assent, was a situation of all others the most dangerous for a young woman who had not seen her nineteenth year. Montalbert, besides the advantages of a very handsome person, had the most insinuating manners and the most interesting address: he was naturally eloquent—love rendered his eloquence doubly formidable; and Rosalie had nothing to oppose to his earnest entreaties for a secret marriage, but the arms with which he had himself furnished her—the fear of a discovery on the part of his mother, which he owned would injure, indeed ruin, his future prospects in life. This he still acknowledged, but averred that it was impossible his mother, who resided at Naples, should know that he was married in England. Rosalie represented, that if Mrs. Vyvian knew it, it must inevitably be known to her. Montalbert insisted that there was no necessity of Mrs. Vyvian's knowing any thing about it. Rosalie entreated that he would first go to
Italy,

Italy, without risking the displeasure of a parent on whom he depended. Montalbert declared, he should be wretched to leave her ; that he did not know how to acquire resolution enough to absent himself, leaving her, perhaps, exposed to the persecution of other lovers, which it distracted him only to think of, while he passed the miserable hours in which he should be absent from her, in anxiety, in torture, which, if she was once securely his, would be infinitely less insupportable.

But notwithstanding the frequent opportunities they now had of meeting, and even of passing whole hours alone together, how was it possible that a private marriage could be effected ?—Rosalie knew that to escape to Scotland, and return without being missed, and without avowedly eloping, was impossible. Montalbert allowed it to be so, but he had another expedient ready—they might be married by a Catholic priest. Rosalie had heard, but in a vague way, that such marriages were not valid

valid, but Montalbert reasoned her out of this persuasion. “ Admitting, (said he), my dearest love, that it were as you have heard, would not such a marriage be binding to me? Might it not at any time be renewed according to the laws of any country where we may reside, when I shall be wholly at liberty? and is it material to you what restrictions are laid upon such marriages in England, if your husband looks upon other laws binding to him?— Even if we were to have the ceremony performed in your church, I should think it necessary to have it gone over a second time by a priest of ours.” By such arguments he sometimes shook the wavering resolution of Rosalie, who, except the single circumstance of his mother’s known aversion to his marrying an English protestant, which her reason told her was unjust and unreasonable, saw nothing that ought to prevent her giving her person where she had already given her heart. In point of family and fortune, Montalbert was infinitely her superior. Her mother there-
fore,

fore, however she might reproach her with having married clandestinely, could not accuse her with having debased herself or degraded her family. She had no other person to whom she was accountable, unless it was her elder brother, whom she loved too much to be quite easy as to his sentiments ; but, on the other hand, it was impossible he could make any objection, unless it was the difference of religion ; yet she dared not venture to tell him, least that single circumstance should appear to him of consequence enough to prevent entirely a union otherwise so desirable.

Every opportunity that occurred, Montalbert pressed his suit with redoubled ardour : he urged, with all the vehemence of passion, the necessity of his immediate return to Italy, as he had already, on various pretences, prolonged his stay two months beyond the time he intended.—There was now danger that his mother might suspect that some of those connections, she was so averse to, were the occasion

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sion of his prolonged absence, and might engage some of her friends in England in an inquiry that would be the cause of discovering what nobody now seemed to suspect. This and numberless other reasons Montalbert always had ready to offer why there was no time to deliberate: he had already conquered one obstacle — the difficulty of finding a Catholic priest who would venture to perform the ceremony.

Besides the consequence, both in England and in Italy, of his family and his connections, the ease with which a dispensation might be obtained whenever his mother withdrew her opposition, and the pecuniary advantage Montalbert promised the priest, with whom he had at length succeeded, knew that Rosalie was the daughter of a country clergyman, and had no relations who were at all likely to be displeased at her marrying a man so greatly her superior, and of course not likely to proceed against one who had
committed

committed a breach of law so much to their advantage : he rather wished to detach Montalbert from his pursuit, by representing the great distance between him and Rosalie in temporal concerns, as well as the difference in spiritual affairs, which appeared to him so momentous. Finding it, however, very bootless to argue with a man of three and twenty, madly in love, he consented to do as Montalbert required, and reconciled his conscience by that accommodating reflection at hand on so many occasions, " If I do not do it, some other will." He stipulated with Montalbert, however, that if there should be any probability of his incurring the heavy penalty for marrying a minor, that he should be immediately sent to Rome at the expence of Montalbert ; an expedient which Montalbert immediately agreed to, as indeed he would have done to any demands the father thought proper to have made, however unreasonable they might have been.

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The longer Rosalie reflected on the proposals of her lover, the fainter became her opposition; yet still conscious that it could not be right to dispose of herself without the consent of her mother and her brother, she more than once intreated Montalbert to allow her to consult them; but he heard this request always with impatience, declaring, that if she determined to tear herself from him, to abandon him to all the horrors of that despair which her loss would inflict, she could find no way more certain than what she proposed. His vehemence, and the conviction of his sincerity, which that vehemence brought with it, once more conquered her scruples. Montalbert extorted once more a reluctant and trembling acquiescence, and then eagerly insisting on finding some immediate opportunity for them to meet, where the priest might attend, Rosalie, terrified at the step she was about to take, again recoiled, and intreated to

be released from her inconsiderate promise.

Though the attachment between these young people seemed not even to be suspected either by Mrs. Vyvian or Mrs. Lessington, yet the conflict in the mind of Rosalie had such an effect on her frame, that the former one day observed it to her as they were sitting together alone. " Surely, my dear, (said she, laying down her work, - and looking very earnestly at Rosalie), surely you are not well."

" Dear Ma'am, (answered Rosalie), why do you suppose so?"

" You are pale, (said Mrs. Vyvian); your eyes are heavy and languid. I am afraid, my love, -----" She hesitated, and the conscience of Rosalie at that moment accusing her, a faint blush overspread her countenance as she eagerly cried, " Afraid, my dear Madam, of what?"

" Nay, of nothing, Rosalie, that need alarm you: I will tell you my fears—
either

either you have some affection that makes you uneasy, or the almost total seclusion in which you live is too much for your spirits."

" Indeed, Madam, my spirits would very ill bear the dissipation in which my sister lives. The seclusion that gives me an opportunity of passing some of my hours with you, is the greatest gratification I can enjoy "

" But to the other article, Rosalie, what do you say? "

" To what article, Madam? "

" Oh! you have forgot already--to what I told you I feared as one cause of the alteration I have observed."

" Indeed, my dear Mrs. Vyvian, I am sensible of no alteration. You know how few people I see, and that with fewer still I have much acquaintance, or wish it."

Mrs. Vyvian shook her head with an air of incredulity, and as Rosalie fancied of concern; but she suffered the dis-

course to drop, and Rosalie left her, trembling lest the truth was suspected, and dreading, yet feeling it necessary, to give an account of this dialogue to Montalbert.

CHAP. IX.

WHAT had passed the preceding evening between Mrs. Vyvian and Rosalie was no sooner repeated to Montalbert, than it served as an additional argument to enforce the consent he had been so long soliciting. Montalbert was of a warm and impetuous temper: though he had never yet been emancipated from the government of an high-spirited and imperious mother, he was not the less bent on pleasing himself, than are those who have never been contradicted. It seemed, indeed, as if the severe restraint he had so long habitually been under, disposed him to be more earnest in a circumstance on which the whole happiness of his life depended; and when Rosalie asked him how he could hope ever to

reconcile his mother to a marriage to which he himself owned she would have unconquerable objections, he inquired, in his turn, what amends she could make him for opposing the only connection which could make him happy, only from prejudice and difference of opinion in matters wherein he could not think as she did, and wherein he thought it unreasonable that her prepossessions should interfere with his choice. "I will certainly not make my mother uneasy, (said he); I will so far pay a compliment to her unfortunate prejudices, as to conceal from her what would make her so: but to relinquish the only woman I could ever love, is surely a greater sacrifice than she ought to demand of me. If, indeed, I were about to disgrace her, Rosalie, by uniting myself with a woman without reputation, or of a very mean and unworthy origin, I should feel that I ought not to be forgiven; but why, because our modes of worshipping God are different—why, because my mother was born in
Italy,

Italy, and you in England, should an imaginary barrier be raised, which must shut me out from happiness for ever? What has reason and common sense to do with all this?"—Rosalie was compelled to acknowledge that it had very little; still, however, the idea of a clandestine marriage shocked her; she solicited most earnestly that her mother might be made acquainted with it. This he strenuously opposed; representing, that if Mrs. Lessington knew it, it would not be a secret from Mrs. Vyvian, "Who, however, she may love you, (said he), would make it a point of conscience to prevent my marrying a Protestant, and ruining myself, as she would conclude I should, in the affections of my mother for ever. You know, Rosalie, how much I love my aunt. There is a pensive resignation to a very unhappy fate, a sort of acquiescence, which arises not from want of sensibility, but from the patience and self-government she has learned, that render her to me infinitely interesting, while her kindness and affection

to me demand all my gratitude. But with great virtues, and I know hardly any one who has so many, she is not without prejudices, which greatly add to her own unhappiness. It is unnecessary to point out to you what these are; nor need I tell you, Rosalie, that they are exactly such as would induce her to think it her indispensable duty to inform my mother of our attachment. Then all the evils, I apprehend, would follow. I must either hazard offending her beyond all hope of forgiveness, or I must lose you for ever."—Let no fastidious critic, on the characters of a novel, declaim against the heroine of this, as being too forward or too imprudent. There are only two ways of drawing such characters: they must either be represented as——

“Such faultless monsters as the world
ne’er saw”——

Or with the faults and imperfections which occur in real life. Of these, many are such as would, were they described as existing in a character for which the reader

is to be interested, entirely destroy that interest. There are other errors, which, in an imaginary heroine, we may at once blame and pity, without finding the interest we take in her story weakened. This is the sentiment that Rosalie may excite ; who being tenderly attached to a man, not only amiable in his person, but of the most insinuating manners, believing his declarations of love, and persuaded that her friends could not disapprove of the step he so earnestly urged her to take ; fearing, on the other hand, to lose him ; that he would be convinced he was indifferent to her, would return to Italy, and make an effort to forget her ; found her objections giving way before so many motives, and at length, though with trembling reluctance, agreed to the expedient Montalbert proposed—of their being married by the priest whom he had engaged for that purpose. Rosalie neither knew the danger this man incurred, nor that her marriage would not be binding. She knew, however, enough, from such information as she had casually

picked up, to express her doubts to Montalbert as to its legality, who found the means of satisfying her scruples. " It is binding to me, (said he), since the ceremony is performed after the laws of our own church ; and where then, my Rosalie, can be the foundation of your doubts?— In a few, a very few days after that fortunate hour, which shall give me a right to call you mine, I must leave you ; but I shall know myself to be your husband ; I shall feel no disquiet, lest the persuasion of your family, or any other circumstance, should throw you into the arms of another, and the hope of returning soon to England to claim you for my wife, will give me patience not only to endure this enforced absence, but will animate me to those exertions that may shorten its duration."——The calmer reason of Rosalie sometimes told her, that there was much of sophistry in many of these arguments ; but what young woman of her age listens long to reason, in opposition to the pleadings of the man she loves?—Montalbert

was

was equally passionate and persevering: he had some plausible manner of obviating every apprehension, and it now only remained to be considered, how the marriage ceremony might pass with most secrecy.

Though Montalbert had not seemed to make more frequent visits than usual at the house of Mrs. Vyvian, nor to appear oftener at Hampstead, he had in reality hardly ever quitted it since Mrs. Vyvian had settled there; but had taken an obscure lodging in the lower part of the village, where he was sure he should not be known, and this gave him an opportunity of remaining later either with his aunt, when Rosalie happened to be there, or at the house of Mrs. Lessington, who was now more frequently than ever in London. Then it was that Rosalie passed the evenings entirely with Mrs. Vyvian, and nothing was so natural as that Montalbert, when he happened to be there, should attend her home, to which Mrs. Vyvian

never seemed to make any objections on Rosalie's account, though she often expressed her apprehensions of the danger he incurred in returning so late to London.

It was strange, that suspecting as Mrs. Vyvian seemed to do, some attachment which made Rosalie unhappy, she had no notion that her nephew might be the object of this attachment; but it seemed never once to have occurred to her, and Montalbert conducted himself so cautiously before her, when Rosalie was of the party, that she had no reason to believe he regarded her otherwise than as a common acquaintance. Montalbert, young as he was, had been a great traveller: he had lived at Paris, at Vienna, at Turin, at Rome, and at Florence, and had acquired in the more early part of his life the reputation of being a young man of dissipation and intrigue. These gaieties had been exaggerated, and Mrs. Vyvian had received an impression of his libertinism, which

which had never been effaced. She now, therefore, could not imagine, that for such a man the simplicity of Rosalie's beauty could have any attractions ; and persuaded, as she was, that he was engaged in intrigues among women of a very different description, she sometimes gently reproved and sometimes slightly rallied him, on these fashionable excesses. He humoured her in the answers he gave ; listened as if half disposed to feel contrition, or defended himself, as if conscious of the truth of these charges—management which would have concealed his real sentiments and designs from a more penetrating observer than Mrs. Vyvian.

During the few days that Montalbert was in doubt how to procure unsuspected the admission of the priest to Rosalie, while he was with her, the family of his aunt arrived from their house in the north to settle for the winter in Park Lane. Mr. Vyvian contented himself with calling one morning on horseback, with a slight and cold inquiry. He told his wife, that he had directed

directed his steward to attend her whenever she pleased on money matters, and that his daughters should visit her the next day: he then mentioned the marriage of the eldest, of which the preliminaries were now settled; he did not, however, tell Mrs. Vyvian of this, because he thought her approbation of any consequence, but spoke of it as a matter settled, signifying, at the same time, that it was his pleasure she should speak to her daughter of the arrangement, as being what every part of her family would not but approve. Mrs. Vyvian acquiesced, without any remonstrance on the cruelty of thus disposing of her child at so early an age, without even consulting her mother. A few tears involuntarily fell from her eyes as soon as her unfeeling husband was gone; but she immediately went to her oratory, and found consolation in the duties of religion; to which, under all these trying circumstances, she had ever recourse.

But the appearance of the two Miss Vyvians had another effect on Montalbert.

bert. These ladies, young as they were, had been early initiated into the world. They were no longer diffident and unassuming, but had all the confidence of women of middle age, without their judgment; were careless of the opinion of all the world as to any thing but their beauty and air of high ton, and rather inclined to provoke censure, by their singularity, than to conciliate by civility, or engage by gentleness. They had already learned that disdain of all inferiors which belongs to people of the very first world; and the alliance the eldest was about to form, which would eventually place her in the first rank of nobility, seemed to have elevated the haughty spirits of both: an alteration which, on their very first visit, their mother saw with additional disquiet; while Montalbert, who was with Mrs. Vyvian when they came, beheld and heard them with disgust, that amounted almost to aversion.

During the stay Montalbert made at her father's seat in the north, Miss Vyvian had
 been

been piqued at the little attention he had
 shewn her, and mortified to observe his
 neglect of those charms, which *she* thought,
 and which her maid assured her, ought to
 attract the homage of all the world. That
 Montalbert was so far from paying her this
 homage, that he took the privilege of his
 near relationship to tell her of her faults,
 was not to be forgiven by Miss Vyvian.
 She had by no means forgotten, now that
 she met him in London, the flights she had
 received in Yorkshire, and attacked him
 with severe sort of raillery, which he failed
 not to return, though with more good-
 humour than the lady deserved. Thus
 passed the first visit; but, on the second,
 (as the young ladies affected still to retain
 so much consideration for their mother as
 to make their airings very frequently to-
 wards Hampstead), it happened, unluckily-
 enough, that Mrs. Vyvian, not aware of
 their coming, had sent for Rosalie to sit
 with her. Montalbert soon after came in;
 and as Mrs. Vyvian was pleased to encour-
 age her taste in drawing, Montalbert, who
 without

without any affectation understood it extremely well, was giving her some rules, and, leaning over her chair, was lost in the pleasure of instructing his charming pupil; but he sometimes varied a little from what he undertook to teach, and, instead of giving her a sketch of the object he was describing, he wrote a line or two in Italian. Mrs. Vyvian was pensively at work, and did not regard them. The room where they sat was at a distance from the door to which the coaches drove up, and while this was going on, a footman entered, announcing the two Miss Vyvians.

Montalbert in confusion quitted the table near which he was standing, and Rosalie, whose cheeks were dyed with blushes, was putting away her drawings; but Mrs. Vyvian, speaking mildly, bade her not disturb herself; then, welcoming her daughters, she said, " My dears, here is your playfellow and acquaintance, the youngest Miss Lessington, your old friend Rosalie."

Miss

Miss Vyvian, towards whom her younger sister seemed to look, as if to regulate her own behaviour, turned haughtily to Rosalie, and making her a formal and cold curtsy, muttered something in so low a voice, that it could not be heard; then, without taking any further notice, began to tell her mother where she had been, and who she had seen. Miss Barbara, the youngest, took not the least notice of Rosalie, but, as if she had never seen her before, sat profoundly silent.

Montalbert, who remarked with indignation this insolent behaviour, and who saw a faint blush of grief and regret wavering on the pale cheek of Mrs. Vyvian, was tempted to express some part of what he felt, but he checked himself, and had determined to go, when Miss Vyvian, casting a malicious look at the drawing-table, and then at Rosalie, who sat by it unoccupied, said, " Oh ! I see now, Mr. Montalbert, from whence it happens, that your friends in town complain that they never see you—
you

you have found employment here in teaching some of the fine arts."

"If I were capable of teaching them, (replied Montalbert, who could not so command his countenance, but that it expressed his resentment), if I were capable, Miss Vyvian, of instructing, I should think myself highly honoured were that young lady to become my scholar; but, I assure you, she is already so great a proficient, that it would not be in my power to improve the elegance of her execution."

"Oh! I dare say, (replied Miss Vyvian); and now I recollect, Miss Lessington, I think you used to be fond of drawing, and had some lessons *when you lived with* us. But, Mr. Montalbert, since this lady has no occasion for your instructions, do tell me what it is you do with yourself? Do you know, that out of the few people I have seen, at least a dozen have asked me, what is become of my gay and gallant cousin? Some have asserted, (added she, with a very significant look), that you are married,

married, and others, that you are become melancholy mad for the love of some *rural* beauty ; but all agree that you are a lost creature."

Mrs. Vyvian, however, hurt at such a wild and improper speech, had not time to express, as much as she dared do, her sense of its indecorum, before she was struck with the pale countenance of Rosalie, who seemed ready to faint. Montalbert was about to reply, when Mrs. Vyvian, as if unable to check herself, rose from her seat, and taking Rosalie's hand, said, in a tremulous voice, " I am sorry, my dear Miss Lessington, that you are so shocked at the unkindness and rudeness of Miss Vyvian ; I will take care that you shall not again be subject to it. My woman shall wait on you home, and I beg you and your mother will accept my apology, thus hastily made, till I can renew it in person."

Rosalie, who had never seen Mrs. Vyvian exert so much spirit before, but who was more terrified than ever, least the re-
tort.

tort of her daughter should bring on a quarrel of which she would be the cause ; alarmed too at the hint given about Montalbert, and almost sinking under her apprehensions of every kind, was glad to quit the room, which she did immediately ; but, disabled by the violence of her emotions to go farther than the next, she sat down and burst into tears.

While she was, however, reasoning herself into some degree of composure, Mrs. Vyvian, whose languid spirits were roused by the ill-behaviour of her daughter, was reproving her in very bitter terms, such indeed as she had never used before ; but far from feeling the severity of a remonstrance she so well deserved, she affected to turn off her impertinence with a laugh. " Dear Madam, (cried she), I had no notion of making you so angry. Upon my honour I meant nothing in the way of affronting your fair protégée ; and as to behaving as if I had forgotten her, dear, you know one really forgets every body in a year or two."

" You

“ You have at least forgot *yourself*, Miss Vyvian,” said her mother.

Miss Barbara now fancied it necessary for her to enter into a defence of her sister. “ I am sure, Madam, my sister meant nothing; but one must really feel it grating to find that Miss, that country parson’s daughter, preferred to us. People have often said, indeed, a great while ago, that the Lessington family had as much of your favour as your nearest relations. I am sure neither of us, neither my sister or me, had a thought of offending you—but it *does* seem hard to your own children, to see people, who are comparatively strangers, so much more taken notice of.”

“ It is you and your sister Barbara, (said the unhappy mother, while sobs stifled her voice), who have estranged yourselves from me; it is you and your sister -----” She could not go on. Montalbert, shocked by the sight of her distress, approached her, and, tenderly taking her hand, said, “ Dearest Madam, do not, I implore you,
distress

distress yourself thus. These ladies are young and inconsequent ; they *may* learn, and, I heartily hope, will, to know the value of such a mother." The agony of Mrs. Vyvian redoubled. " Nay, but I intreat you, (continued he), to be calm. Allow me to send your woman to you."

" O no ! (cried she, with a deep sigh), do not leave me, Montalbert. I have in you all the consolation which is left me, now that my son is sent far from me."

" Since you oblige me to speak plainer, Madam, (said Miss Vyvian, who seemed wholly unmoved at her mother's distress), since you compel me to say disagreeable things, I must tell you that it was quite time my brother *was* sent, as my Papa sent him ; for *he* too was in danger of becoming too much attached to the same people that have weaned your affections from us. I should never have mentioned it, though, I assure you, if I had not seen *that girl here*, and been so found fault with for not worshipping her enough ; for now my brother

ther

ther is gone, it is a matter of indifference to me who her heart attracts; *other* people are old enough to take care of themselves—but come, sister, our company does not seem just now to give Mama any pleasure; another time, perhaps, we may be more fortunate.”

“ Before you go, (said Mrs. Vyvian, endeavouring to stifle her convulsive sighs, and to speak distinctly), I conjure you to tell me what you mean about my son.”

“ It is a very unwelcome task, Ma’am, (replied her eldest daughter), and I might not be believed; but if you ask the Abbé Hayward, he, perhaps, may obtain credit, even when he tells you so unwelcome a truth, as that your son, when you thought him engaged in quite another tour, was at Holmwood with one or two of his friends, (she cast a malicious look at Montalbert as she said this), and there was reason to apprehend that this Miss, or some of the Misses her sisters, were the occasion of his paying much more frequent visits

at

at the parsonage house, than even you yourself, perhaps, would have approved of, since, I can hardly think, your friendship would induce you to overlook the shocking disparity between the only son of Mr. Vyvian and *such people as those.*”

It seemed as if the unfortunate mother was utterly incapable of answering. She repeated in a faint voice, “The Abbé Hayward!—My son—My son at Holmwood!”—Her daughters, who appeared thus to have plunged a dagger in her heart, left her without any attempt to mitigate the pain they had inflicted, and she remained alone with Montalbert, who, during this conversation, had exhibited symptoms of anger and disquiet, which Mrs. Vyvian was too much affected to observe. It was some moments before she recovered herself enough to command her voice. “Tell me, dear Montalbert, (cried she at length), what does Miss Vyvian mean?—Tell me, when was my Charles at Holmwood?—When did he thus visit Mr. Lefington’s family?”

“ Never, Madam, I can venture to assure you, with the least improper design. . . . It is true, that when we were upon our tour this summer round the coast, the Count and I expressed a wish to see Holmwood. He, as having heard it spoken of as a fine old place ; I, because I used to be fond of it when I was a boy, and passed there the most pleasant of my hours during my occasional visits to England. As Vyvian was as fond of the scheme as we were, we went thither for four or five days. Charles fatigued himself too much, and was taken ill ; but he recovered perfectly the next day : for some reason or other, he did not seem to wish you and his father should know he had visited Holmwood. This I only know by his enjoining the Count to secrecy, when, he being obliged to return to London, left us there.”

“ You staid there then some time ? ”

“ I cannot be correct, (answered Montalbert hesitating ; our stay, whether there or elsewhere, seemed to me to be a matter of no consequence at the time—nor could

I ima-

I imagine why it was necessary to keep a man's visit to the seat of his father a secret. As near as I can recollect, we were there about seven or eight days."

"Seven or eight days ! (repeated Mrs. Vyvian) ; and did Charles pass much of his time at the house of Mr. Lessington ?"

"Indeed he did not. I believe I may venture to assure you, he never was there but when I accompanied him : I am sure, I may say, that he went with no design that you could disapprove, and that all Miss Vyvian has thought proper to say originates in misrepresentation on one side, and malicious jealousy on the other. For Heaven's sake, dearest Madam, make yourself easy ! I am persuaded, that, in regard at least to Charles, you have no reason to be otherwise."

A little soothed by these assurances, Mrs. Vyvian became more calm, and at that moment seeing the Abbé Hayward coming up the garden, of which he had

a key to let himself in, from his morning walk, Montalbert rang for Nesbit, Mrs. Vyvian's woman, and leaving her mistress to her care, hastened away to speak to him.

Their conference was long and serious. Mr. Hayward assured Montalbert, that he would quiet the spirits of Mrs. Vyvian relative to the supposed visits of her son at Barton Brooks, and recommended it to Montalbert very earnestly to conceal as far as was now possible the disagreeable dialogue which had passed that morning. "You know Mr. Vyvian, (said he), and how violent and unfeeling he is. . . . There is no knowing what rudeness and reproaches he may throw on that excellent lady, if this family dispute goes to any length. . . . I tremble for her peace."—The council this good man gave was perfectly reasonable. Montalbert felt that it was so; yet there was something in his manner, when he spoke of the Lessington family, which gave
Montalbert

Montalbert an idea of some mystery that he could not comprehend. He returned, however, no more to the house, but hastened to find Rosalie at that of her mother.

Mrs. Lessington had gone to London early in the morning, was to go to a play that night, and to an opera the next, a spectacle which she had not seen for many years, and about which she had expressed as much eagerness as a girl. It was in hopes of making his advantage of this absence, that Montalbert had met Rosalie at Mrs. Vyvian's in the morning. Rosalie, dreading importunity which she had no longer resolution to contend with, had taken shelter there. Mrs. Vyvian, not at all expecting either Montalbert or her daughters, had engaged her to stay all day; when Miss Vyvian's jealousy and malice awakened by the sight of Rosalie, whom she had never thought so very handsome before, had, together with some circumstances hitherto concealed or stifled,

occasioned the scene of the morning: a scene which did more to accelerate the views of Montalbert, than he could have done in another week with all the eloquence of the most passionate love.

CHAP. X.

THERE could be but little doubt but that the correspondence between Montalbert and Rosalie was suspected, if not absolutely discovered. Firmly as he thought he could rely on the fidelity of the person he had employed, it was but too evident that he was in some degree betrayed, and Rosalie, whom he found in tears, acknowledged that their situation admitted not of hesitation; that Montalbert must either return immediately to Italy, or risque every discovery in regard to his mother, which he had so many reasons to avoid.

It was vain to weary themselves with conjectures as to the source from which Miss Vyvian derived the intelligence that she detailed with so much malicious pleasure. On any other occasion Montalbert

would have flown into one of those transports of passion to which he was but too subject, and have insisted on an explanation; but the tears and terrors of Rosalie, who saw the discovery likely not only to produce every kind of mischief they dreaded, but eventually to separate them for ever, now checked every impulse of resentment, and left to Montalbert no other wish than to secure her his, and to return to Italy before the malignity of his cousin should have conveyed intelligence thither, which would embroil him for ever with his mother, and probably deprive him of that affluence to which it was now his delight to think he should raise the woman he adored.

There now seemed no alternative between resigning Montalbert for ever, depriving him of his inheritance by a discovery, or consenting to sacrifice her own scruples. It is not difficult to foresee that she chose the latter. Another whole day was to pass before the return of her mother; and it was settled that the priest, whom

whom Montalbert had engaged, should call early in the morning on pretence of a message from Mrs. Lessington to Rosalie; that Montalbert should soon after arrive on his way to Mrs. Vyvian's, of whom he was supposed to be on the point of taking leave—and that the marriage should then be celebrated according to the Romish ritual, in the presence of a friend whom Montalbert was to bring with him. There was, in fact, neither difficulty nor danger of detection in this arrangement. The country servants of Mrs. Lessington, a maid and a boy, took every thing that was told them for granted. The ceremony was soon over, and a testimony of its performance being given to Rosalie, the priest departed to London with the friend of Montalbert, while he himself went to Mrs. Vyvian's, where he intended to dine, and where he hoped his aunt would, without any solicitation, send for Rosalie. In this, however, he was mistaken: he found Mrs. Vyvian so much affected by

the scene of the day before, that she was confined to her bed. She admitted him to her bed side, and he was shocked to see the havoc which even a few hours acute uneasiness had made in her enfeebled frame. " You see, (said she), how it is with me, Montalbert. I have no longer strength to resist that more corrosive of all miseries, the estrangement and ingratitude of my own children—of my daughters, I ought to say—for Charles, my poor boy, I believe loves me ; but what I suffer from them, Montalbert, is indeed——

' Sharper than the serpent's tooth.'

Montalbert endeavoured to sooth her agitated spirits, by representing to her, that her daughters were young and thoughtless, giddy with youth, health, and prosperity, and that a few years would, in all probability, produce a fortunate change in their volatile dispositions. " A few years? (said Mrs. Vyvian, with a melancholy smile) ; and do you think that a *very*
few

few years, or more probably a very few months, will not finish all for me in a much more certain manner?—O yes! yes! ”

She paused a moment as if to recover herself, and then said, in a still lower tone, “ But there is one thing, my dear Harry, that I wish to say to you, perhaps—perhaps I may never see you again, and I would feign - - - - - ”

Montalbert remained silent in anxious expectation of what she was going to say; but, as if she could not collect resolution enough, she sighed deeply, put her hand to her head, and seemed to suffer great pain there; then, becoming more languid, said, “ But I hope I *shall* see you again, Harry, when I am more able to converse: yet surely you do not mean to prolong much your stay in England? ”

“ If my mother would grant me permission, (answered he), to stay till spring, I own it would be agreeable to me.”

“ I should not suppose she would, Harry, (said Mrs. Vyvian). I understood

that her last letters expressed great anxiety for your return, and you know she does not very patiently bear contradiction. . . . But I wonder, Montalbert, what attractions England can have for you. Oh! if it were *in my* power to go to Italy, how readily would I quit this country for ever; and yet - - - - -" — Again she hesitated and sighed, and Montalbert, finding no pretence for naming Rosalie, and that it was unlikely he should pass the day with her as he had fondly hoped, assured her he would see her again several times before he left England, since he should await the arrival of his next letters before he fixed the day of his departure, and then took his leave.

It was but too certain, however, that he had that morning received the most positive commands from his mother to set out immediately, mingled with some severe reproaches for his having delayed his journey, from time to time, so much beyond that which he had originally fixed for his stay. He now thought it more than

than ever impossible to leave Rosalie, though he had sworn that if she were once irrevocably his, he would go without further hesitation. To invent some plausible pretence for the evasion of this promise was now his object, and so great was the reluctance with which he thought of going, that he sometimes determined rather to brave the displeasure of his mother, and boldly to combat her prejudices, than leave his wife, now more dear to him than ever: but was there no medium between these extremities? was it not possible for him to take her with him?—While he meditated on the practicability of such a project, and the arguments he should use to prevail upon her to consent to it, he found himself before the door of Mrs. Lessington's house, and was going in, when he was amazed and concerned to observe her and her daughter Maria getting out of a coach, which he had till then imagined had just stopped at the house of one of her neighbours. As he could not retreat without being seen, and his uneasy curiosity

was

was excited by this unexpected and unwelcome return, he advanced towards Mrs. Lessington, and was beginning a speech about Mrs. Vyvian, whose name he meant to use as an excuse for his calling; but, without seeming to attend, she began to apologize for not having it in her power to ask him in, being, she said, in great alarm on account of her daughter.

“What daughter?—and oh! for Heaven’s sake, what is the matter?”—were words that were on the point of issuing from Montalbert’s lips, who thought only of Rosalie: when this indiscretion on his part was prevented by Mrs. Lessington’s proceeding to tell him, that her eldest married daughter, who was near her time, had suffered from being overturned in a chaise, and had entreated to see her mother, who had, therefore, hastened from London, where she received the letter, to pack up a few necessaries, and was setting out post immediately afterwards for the house of her daughter in Sussex. Montalbert, alarmed lest Rosalie was going
too,

too, trembled so much, that he had not courage to ask ; but to leave the house without knowing was impossible. Regardless, therefore, of the rules of decorum, which certainly demanded that he should absent himself, he followed Mrs. Lessington into the house, where his sudden re-appearance, and the unexpected arrival of her mother, had such an effect on the countenance and manner of Rosalie, as could not have escaped observation, had not Mrs. Lessington and Maria been both much engaged with the immediate preparations for their journey ; for amidst her maternal anxiety for her daughter, the elder lady was by no means indifferent to the appearance she was to make among her former country neighbours ; and though she was still in deep mourning, she observed that it was not the less necessary to be “ tolerably dressed.”

Miss Maria was of course more solicitous on this important matter than her mother ; and in the midst of their giving orders to

to one to run to the mantua-makers, and another to fetch home a new bonnet, &c. &c. they neither of them seemed to recollect that it was necessary to make some arrangement about Rosalie, or even to remember that she was in the house.

She remained, therefore, a few moments in the parlour with Montalbert, who, advancing trembling to her, inquired eagerly if she also was going? “ I think not, (answered she); but my mother, in her hurry, seems totally to have forgotten me.”—“ I pray Heaven, (said he), that you may be left behind! If you go, I shall be distracted. When will it be decided?—How can I know?”

“ I had better go up to my mother, (answered Rosalie), offer to assist her, and ask for her commands.”—O hasten, (cried Montalbert), my angel, or I shall die with impatience!—I *must* stay till I know what is to be your destination, and will make some pretence for my intrusion.” Rosalie then went up to her mother,

ther, who seemed to be awakened, by her presence, to some sense of recollection as to what was to become of her youngest daughter during her absence. "I don't know, child, (said she), how to take you with us very well, as your brother Blagham is in town for two days on law business, and is desirous of going down with us in a post chaise."—Rosalie's heart beat so, that she could hardly breathe.

"I declare, (continued her mother), I know not how to manage about you. To be sure it will be but a disagreeable journey, and I suppose, my dear, you do not want to go?"

"If I could be of any use to my sister," said Rosalie hesitating.

"Oh! as to *that*, (answered Mrs. Lessington) there is no *occasion* to be sure; but it will be lonely for you at home, unless, indeed, Mrs. Vyvian would be so good as to take you."

Rosalie knew, from the scene of the preceding morning, that Mrs. Vyvian could

not,

not, without exposing herself anew to the insults of her daughter, which it was painful even to think of.

This, however, she could not now explain to her mother, who, after a moment's hesitation, proceeded. " I have a mind to send to Mrs. Vyvian; yet I don't know—perhaps it will be inconvenient to her. There are times when I know it would be painful to her to have company;—but—let me—see—I dare say my friends the Hillmores would take you for a few days, and then you might come back; and Mrs. Vyvian would, perhaps, nay I am sure she would, have you with her as much as her spirits will allow, and by that time—most probably, you know we should be come back."

Though Rosalie knew the Hillmores were the most disagreeable people in the world, she had neither courage to object, nor presence of mind to propose any other plan. She thought she saw in her mother's manner an evident wish to get her off her hands,

hands, on the present occasion, without much solicitude as to the propriety of her situation during her absence; and at that moment she felt happy in the consciousness of being the wife of Montalbert, who would, in every event, defend and protect her.

She remained silent, however, and Mrs. Lessington, who was still busily engaged in packing, at length turned to her, and said, " Well, child! and what do you say to the plan of passing the little time we shall be away between Mrs. Vyvian and Mr. Hillmore's?"

" I know very little of Mr. Hillmore's family, (said Rosalie timidly); but I dare say, Madam, you are sure they would be kind enough to receive me."

" To be sure I am, (replied Mrs. Lessington); and as to Mrs. Vyvian, I wish I could see her myself—but—I have not time.—However—stay—do you think Mr. Montalbert is gone?—I dare say he would be so good as to carry a message for me."

" I am

“ I am persuaded he would, (said Rosalie timidly), if he is not gone.”

“ Do go down and see : no—I will go myself.” She then descended to the room where Montalbert still remained, who, when he heard the commission she gave him to his aunt, accepted it with transport he could with difficulty disguise. “ I only waited here, (said he), to know if I could be of any use to you in your present hurry, and you cannot oblige me more than in employing me.” He then hastened to Mrs. Vyvian, to whom he delivered a message rather suited to his own purposes than very exact as to correctness, and modulating Mrs. Vyvian’s answer in the same way, he returned instantly to Mrs. Lessington, who, concluding the disposal of Rosalie settled her own way, told her she would leave a note for her friends the Hillmores, which she hastily wrote, and then directed Rosalie to stay a few hours after her to adjust the house and put every thing away, which her present hurry did not allow her to attend to. After which

an hackney-coach was to convey Rosalie to Mincing Lane, where Mr. Hillmore lived, and she was herself to deliver the note that was to secure her reception for the first three or four days of her mother's absence; after which, if that absence continued, she was to return and remain under the protection of Mrs. Vyvian.

This arrangement was so exactly calculated to answer all the wishes of Montalbert, that he now trembled with apprehension lest it should be revoked. He would not, however, venture to stay, lest Mrs. Lessington should entertain any suspicions of the cause of his extraordinary zeal; he therefore wished her a good journey, and left her. Soon after which Rosalie saw her mother and sister get into a post-chaise, which was ordered to stop to take up Mr. Blagham at the house of a friend at Islington, and then they drove away, leaving her to reflect on the extraordinary circumstances that had thus left
her

her at liberty, and to await with a beating heart the return of Montalbert.

In less than half an hour he appeared, and telling the maid who opened the door that he brought a message from Mrs. Vyvian, he was admitted. As nothing was so easy as for Rosalie to leave the house with her clothes under the directions her mother had given her, nor less hazardous than to postpone her visit to Mr. Hillmore's family for a day or two, Montalbert vanquished every objection she made to going with him; the hackney-coach, therefore, that was to have conveyed her to Mincing Lane, and in which she did not set out till towards evening, went no further than to the suburbs of London, where Montalbert waited for her with another, from whence they got into a post-chaise, and were soon at a distance from London.

Thither, however, it was necessary that Rosalie should return in two days at the farthest, lest her mother direct to her
there,

there, and her absence should be discovered. It was long before Montalbert would listen to her earnest representations on this subject: but there was no alternative; he must either tear himself from her, or suffer it to be known that she had eloped, nor could it long remain a secret with whom. Her representations were so forcible, and he felt them to be so just, that his reluctance at length gave way to the considerations of his wife's tranquillity, and he consented to her return to town, whither he conducted her, and putting her into a coach, followed it at a distance on foot, till it set her down at the house of her mother's friends.

But as Mrs. Vyvian had no acquaintance or communication with this family, the principal of whom was an attorney in the city, nothing was more easy than to conceal the day on which she left their house, as she had concealed the time when her mother intended her visit should begin to them. This, however,

ever, depended on the return of Mrs. Leffington.

Rosalie, on her arrival at the house of Mr. Hillmore, found a very cordial reception; but the manners of the whole family were so unlike those she had in the happiest part of her life been accustomed to—the old lady was so vulgarly civil, the young men so impertinently familiar, and the misses so full of flutter and fashions,—that Rosalie foresaw she would be esteemed very bad company. They had already, from the report of Miss Maria, entertained an idea that their guest was proud and reserved; and Rosalie saw by their manner, that they disliked her and wished her away. The mother, because she feared her beauty might attract one of her sons; the daughters, through jealousy of their lovers. The next day after her arrival there she received a letter from her mother, which informed her that though Mrs. Grierson was doing well, yet it would be ten days before she should return. Rosalie, therefore, armed herself

herself with patience, to pass a few days longer where she was before she returned to Hampstead, but Montalbert could not suffer her to remain there without seeing her. As he was not known to the people of the house, he called under pretence of a message from Mrs. Vyvian, but he could only see her in a formal way in the presence of Mrs. Hillmore and her daughters, who *prodigiously* admired him as a *very elegant genteel man indeed*.—He found they were going that evening to the play, where he determined to be himself.

It was then that he saw the superior beauty of Rosalie attract all eyes, and heard inquiries around him, who that lovely girl was in mourning? The faces of the Miss Hillmores were well known, though their party would have passed wholly unnoticed, but for the brilliant star that now first appeared among them. Montalbert, from the other side of the house, enjoyed a peculiar kind of pleasure at the admira-

VOL. I. L tion

tion excited by his wife : but one of the foibles of his temper was jealousy ; when therefore he saw two or three young men, acquaintances of the Hillmores, enter their box, evidently with a design of being introduced to her ; when he saw young Hillmore, who was a sort of a city wit and city buck, displace one of his sisters in order to sit near Rosalie, he could remain where he was no longer ; but crossing the house, went into the next box, where he sat the remainder of the evening, not near enough to speak to her, so entirely was she surrounded ; but suffering inexpressible torments because she was spoken to by others.

His impetuous spirit could ill submit to a longer course of such punishment. He went out, therefore, to a tavern, a few moments before the play was over, and wrote a note to her, in which he insisted on her leaving the Hillmores the next morning. “ I will send a servant, (said he), with a chariot and a letter, as if
from

from Mrs. Vyvian. As the people you are with know neither her carriage nor her writing, you may very easily leave them without the least suspicion. I will take care of the rest ; but remember, Rosalie, I must not be refused—I would not leave you exposed another day to the impertinence of the vulgar puppies you are surrounded by to be master of an empire.”

Montalbert, having sealed this letter, waited at the door of the box for her coming out ; but as she had on each side of her competitors for the honour of leading her out, it was not without difficulty he found an opportunity of giving it to her. .

The next day an handsome chariot, with a servant in livery, was at the door of Mr. Hillmore by eleven o'clock ; the latter brought a note apparently from Mrs. Vyvian, which Rosalie shewed as a reason for leaving Mrs. Hillmore, who, while she expressed great concern that they were

so soon to lose the pleasure of *her good company*, was, as well as the young ladies, heartily glad to see her depart. A short time brought her to a place where Montalbert waited for her to begin another short excursion from London. He endeavoured to appease the excessive fear she expressed, lest these journies should be discovered, by assuring her that he had taken every possible precaution to prevent it. That Mrs. Vyvian did not expect her for two or three days, at the end of which time he promised she should go back to Hampstead, and he had engaged a person to convey to him any letters that might arrive in the mean time from Mrs. Lessington, lest, from any alteration in her plan, she should return and not find her daughter where she expected.—These measures, and Montalbert's solemn assurances, that as soon as he saw her once more safe under the protection of her mother, he would no longer delay a journey which

was

was so necessary on account of his own, and that he would force himself, though at the expence of his present felicity, to pursue such measures as might secure uninterrupted possession hereafter.

C H A P. XI.

W HILE Rosalie was thus, as Mrs. Vyvian believed, passing part of the time of her mother's absence as she had directed, that excellent but unhappy woman, Mrs. Vyvian herself, was suffering under the most acute anxiety. The absence of her son, the estrangement of her two daughters, and the cold and even severe conduct of the man to whom she had been sacrificed, made together a cruel combination of evils ; which, however, did not so entirely occupy her mind, but that she felt for Rosalie, to whom she had ever shewn the tenderest partiality, and to whom she would with delight have granted an asylum in her own house, had she not been deterred by the envy and ill-humour which

at the hints they had given of an affection for her on the part of her son, which, if it should once reach the ears of Mr. Vyvian, would, she knew, so greatly enrage him, that he would forbid her ever receiving any of the Lessington family again. Timid and mild, and with nerves shaken and enfeebled by a long course of unhappiness, Mrs. Vyvian was unequal to contention with a violent, haughty, and unfeeling man, who disdained to listen to reason, and held all friendly attachments, every thing that did not coincide with self-interested motives, to be mere cant and pretence. He had never considered the Lessington family with an eye of favour; but while Lessington lived, he had been useful to him in electioneering matters, and therefore he, and of course his family, had been endured; but the apprehension of any attachment between young Vyvian and a person whom his father considered so infinitely beneath him, would not have been suffered a moment, and Mrs. Vyvian knew that on the slightest suspicion she should be

overwhelmed with menaces and reproaches, which she found herself altogether unable to sustain. This dread alone prevented her from hazarding a repetition of the language her daughters had held, and compelled her to submit to so great a deprivation as that of often resigning Rosalie's company, whose interesting gratitude, and innocent, yet sensible, conversation, formed one of her greatest pleasures, and was best calculated to soothe her wounded heart.

Still, however, she was uneasy that so young and so pretty a woman should be consigned to the care of people of whom she had no very high opinion. She fancied they were low bred, and was persuaded that if the morals of Rosalie were in no danger among them, her delicacy of mind must suffer from the style of such company: when, therefore, she saw Montalbert, who, while Rosalie was really at Mr. Hillmore's, called upon his aunt as usual lest his absence might be remarked, she continually questioned him about these people,

people, and he, not willing to appear to know much about them, gave her such answers as served rather to increase her solicitude for her former protégée, and her regret that she could not give her protection in her own house.

Montalbert never loved his aunt so well as when he thus saw her interested for Rosalie; and sometimes it seemed as if this interest was so strong, that she could not be angry at finding his sentiments so entirely agreed with hers. Half resolved to open his whole heart to her, and entreat her countenance, her protection; for his wife, he sat meditating what to say, when the entrance of Mr. Hayward, or some sentence Mrs. Vyvian uttered, again shook his resolution, and deterred him from entrusting to her a secret of so much consequence; while, if it still remained a secret to every body but to her, his Rosalie could derive no benefit from the partial information, for Mrs. Vyvian would still be deprived of the power of receiving her as Rosalie Lessington, and as the wife of

Montalbert it would be still more impossible.

It was now time for her to return to Hampstead, where all Mrs. Vyvian could do was to receive her on those days when none of her own family were likely to call upon her, or if they did, to send her into another room. Montalbert, during the four or five days that were to be the last of his stay in England, passed a part of each with Mrs. Vyvian, who, while she thought it her duty to press him to begin a journey that had been so long delayed, began to be seriously uneasy about his health, which she thought was evidently declined. He was pensive and absent, spoke little, and had lost his appetite—symptoms that she fancied indicated a decline, and induced her to urge him with increased earnestness to begin his journey, in the persuasion that the winter in England was inimical to his constitution. Montalbert every day promised to fix the day of his departure ; but every day brought with it some excuse :—his baggage, some things he had bespoke as
presents

presents to his Italian friends, were not ready; his own servant was taken ill; he must wait the arrival of a friend from the country, with whom he had business relative to his family's northern property—and while this went on, he lived in a miserable state of restraint, never seeing his wife but for a short time in the presence of Mrs. Vyvian, unless she happened to be there of an evening, in which case he went home with her, but attended by a servant, under pretence that his horses were at a stable not far from the house of Mrs. Lessington.

Such a state of constraint was insupportable. More passionately attached to Rosalie than before he became her husband, the idea of leaving her for weeks and months was become more terrible than that of death: he fancied it disgraceful to submit to divide himself from all he held dear, influenced merely by pecuniary considerations, and often resolved to acknowledge his marriage and brave the consequences; but then the fear of reducing to

poverty the woman he adored—of exposing to the inconveniences of indigence her whom he thought worthy of a throne, checked his resolution of making this dangerous avowal ; and again he determined to leave her in the hope of returning to claim her, and place her in a situation of life which she seemed born to fill.

Rosalie seized every opportunity that now presented itself to press his going.— She urged his former promises, his own acknowledgements of the necessity of his departure : again he promised he would go, but again found it impossible to tear himself from her. But now her mother returned, and their meeting must become more rare and more difficult; and at length, but not till after he had received another letter from his mother, Montalbert determined to go. The last interview he could obtain with his wife was short and hazardous. Neither of them could say farwel ; and when he was gone, and Rosalie knew she should see him no more, she felt so depressed, that, apprehen-

five of the remarks that might be made, she retired to her bed under pretence of a violent head-ach, though the pain she felt was in her heart.

This pretence could not, however, be long continued, and Rosalie returned, though reluctantly, to the common business of life, while Montalbert, scarce knowing what he did, pursued his way to the sea coast from whence he was to embark for France, meaning to pass through that country to Italy; but the greater the distance became between him and the object of his love, the less supportable it became: a thousand times he was tempted to return, and rather hazard every future consequence than subject himself to the present misery of a separation so painful. Arrived on the borders of the sea, this distracting irresolution redoubled. It was yet in his power to return to all he held dear on earth—a few leagues of land only were between them, but soon immense worlds of water would divide them, and
he

he was conscious, that the single circumstance of its being out of his power to return when he would, must increase all the impatience he now felt; yet his reason told him, that his temporary absence ought to be undergone, since it might secure the repose hereafter of the woman he loved.

As it was now a time when multitudes of English, who had long been prevented by the war from visiting the continent, were hastening to France, Montalbert was not many hours waiting for a wind, before he met some of his acquaintance, from whom it was impossible for him to escape. The gaiety and vivacity of these men, fatigued without amusing the mind of Montalbert; they were, however, of some use to him in calling off his attention from the subject, on which it was painful and useless for him to dwell. One of his friends rallied his supposed melancholy, another rattled away on past adventures and future projects of his own; and, amidst this variety

riety of conversation, the wind becoming favourable, the whole party were summoned on board, and in a few hours Montalbert found himself at Calais.

His friends, impatient to get to Paris, hastened on their way, while Montalbert was again left alone to indulge his uneasy reflections.

The traveller, who quits England with anguish of mind, has often found a transient relief in the variety and novelty offered by his arrival in a country, which, though so near his own, offers scenes so unlike those he has been accustomed to. But this change had lost its power over the mind of Montalbert, having travelled so often between Italy and England through France, each country was equally well known to him; and relapsing into his former despondence, he wandered along the French coast, looking with aching eyes towards England, and again tempted to return to it.—At length, however, after two days indulgence of this weakness, for such he owned it was, he once more reasoned him-
self

self into a resolution to proceed, and though with an heart which became more heavy every league, he hastened towards Naples, making no stay at Paris, or any other town through which his route lay.

While he was thus obeying the imperious dictates of duty, Rosalie, concealing the wretchedness of her heart, endeavoured to pass the time of this cruel absence in perfecting herself in those branches of knowledge most agreeable to him; but very unpleasant were the many hours she was obliged to pass among people who had no ideas in common with her, who were engaged in other pursuits, and who seemed to consider her, what indeed she really was, a being of quite another species, who, in being among them, was evidently displaced.

The only time she passed with any degree of satisfaction, was that when she was admitted to sit with Mrs. Vyvian, and to converse with the Abbé Hayward.—Miss Vyvian was now married and gone, accompanied by her father and her sister to

the seat of her husband's family in great parade. Her mother, of whom she had taken a cold leave, sunk into deeper dejection than ever: not that she felt as a misfortune this more certain separation from a daughter, who had long ceased to return her maternal tenderness; but it seemed as if her frame could no longer resist the sorrow inflicted upon her by the absence of a son she adored, aggravated by the ingratitude of his sisters.

Rosalie appeared to be more dear to her than ever, and there was now no impediment to their being often together; but Mrs. Vyvian, whose health visibly declined, was not always well enough to leave her bed, or to be amused with Rosalie's endeavours to relieve her long hours of solitude by reading or music. When she was able, however, to sit up, the duties of her religion, which she fulfilled with the most scrupulous exactness, alone detained her from the society of Rosalie. Whatever might be the dejection of Mrs. Vyvian's
mind,

mind, her penetration was not blunted, and she saw that something unusual pressed upon the spirits of her young friend: again then she spoke to her of what she apprehended—"You are certainly not well, Rosalie, (said Mrs. Vyvian, as they were sitting alone together), *or* you are unhappy?"—"I am well, indeed, my dear Madam, (she replied); as to being unhappy, I am not particularly so—I own to you, that the continual round of company in which my mother is engaged is far from adding to the pleasantness of my life; and sometimes I languish for an abode in my native country, as solitary as our parsonage under the southern hills."

"There is more in it than that, dear girl," said Mrs. Vyvian, with a look that expressed her incredulity.

"You would not surely wonder if there were, (answered Rosalie). I have often wondered at my own inconsequence in not being more depressed, when I recollect

left that, whenever I lose my mother, I shall become a friendless and destitute orphan."

"Not, if I live, (said Mrs. Vyvian—then, pausing a moment, she added in a slow and solemn voice)—for, as I think, my early indulgence to my daughters, or rather to myself, in having you so much at Holmwood during your infancy, has perhaps been the means of estranging you from your family, I consider it as my duty to make you what little amends I can—much, alas! is not in my power, for the unintentional injury I have done you."

The tears rose in the eyes of Rosalie as Mrs. Vyvian concluded this sentence. "O no, dearest Madam, (answered she)—your kindness to me, never, never, injured me—so far otherwise, that I think I should, *but* for that kindness, have been the most unhappy creature in the world. At least I know that the only moments for which I would wish to live
are

are those when you permit me to be with you."

"And therefore it is, my love, that I think I have injured you. Your mother, your sisters are happy among acquaintance and parties of their own, from which you fly with disgust: nor is this all—I am sensible that you have refused a very advantageous match from the same prepossession."

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Vyvian, that, as far as I am able to judge, I should have refused Mr. Hughson, though I had never enjoyed the advantages of being admitted to Holmwood. Indeed, had I been in the most humble condition of life, I am sure I should have preferred remaining in it, and even embracing the hardest labour, to giving my person to a man from whom my heart recoiled."

A deep and long-drawn sigh, as if some painful recollections had arisen at that moment, half interrupted the answer of Mrs. Vyvian, who said, "You are certainly

tainly right in the sentiment, Rosalie—but it is sometimes not in the power of young women to resist parental authority. However, admitting that a man, less disagreeable than you represent this Hughson to have been, should now present himself; tell me, Rosalie—answer me ingenuously—would he not be equally rejected? ”

The eyes of Mrs. Vyvian, which, though generally soft and languid, were very expressive, were fixed steadily on the countenance of Rosalie as she asked this question. Rosalie, who affected to be steadily at work, looked up, and met these penetrating eyes: a deep blush suffused her cheeks; she was conscious of it, and became more confused. Yet, making an effort to recollect herself, and to speak with composure, she said, “ O nothing is so—so very unlikely, as that *any* man should have a preference for me!—I never thought whether I should refuse any other offer or no—because it is so improbable,
that

that it is hardly worth while to suppose about it."

"Not so improbable as you affect to imagine, Rosalie—but you are not sincere. I do not wish, my dear, to distress you, and we will drop the discourse at this time; but another day, perhaps, I may talk to you further, for I have something very serious to say to you, and I think, Rosalie, you will not deceive me, since it may be very material to us both."

More and more confused, and not doubting but that by some means or other Mrs. Vyvian had discovered her marriage, she was too much agitated to allow herself to consider, whether, if this were really the case, it was likely Mrs. Vyvian should speak as she had done; but trembling and breathless she hastened to put her work into the work-basket, and, affecting to understand what her friend had last said as an hint to depart, she smiled, and replying that she was always
happy

happy to answer any questions from her, and that she hoped always to be ingenuous with so good a friend, she hastened away, which Mrs. Vyvian did not oppose.

CHAP. XII.

THE night that followed this conversation was the most uneasy Rosalie had ever yet known. From what had passed she could not doubt but that Mrs. Vyvian knew of her marriage; yet it was incomprehensible if she did, that she should have expressed so little anger or disapprobation: yet what else but her knowing of the mutual attachment between her nephew and her protégée could have urged her to speak as she did?

The various conjectures that agitated the mind of Rosalie, allowed her not to sleep. She had never till now tasted, in its full bitterness, the pain that is inflicted on an ingenuous mind by concealment and dissimulation. Conscious that she merited the loss of Mrs. Vyvian's good opinion,
and

and that the longer this mystery was continued on her part the more unpardonable it would appear, she endeavoured to reason herself into a resolution of unbofoming herself to Mrs. Vyvian, and rather enduring her reproaches for precipitancy and indiscretion, than suffer the misery of living in continual dread of being detected in a falsehood. The most probable conjecture she could form was, that Mrs. Vyvian knew the truth, and had held the conversation she had heard the preceding evening to give Rosalie an opportunity of declaring what was already known. This supposition strengthened her wavering resolves, and she arose in the morning, believing she had force of mind enough to disclose the secret that weighed upon her mind; but when a note came from Mrs. Vyvian requesting to see her as soon as she had breakfasted, her courage at once forsook her, and hardly could she find strength to obey the summons.

On her arrival, however, at the house of Mrs. Vyvian, she found nothing remarkable in the manner or looks of her friend, who seemed as to her health to suffer less than usual. Rosalie inquired, as she had been accustomed to do, if she should fetch a book—Mrs. Vyvian answered no; and bid her take her work.

For some time the conversation ran on indifferent topics; at length contriving to bring it without abruptness to the point she wished, Mrs. Vyvian renewed the subject on which she had touched the day before. Rosalie, whose heart was beating so violently that she could hardly breathe, listened to her in silence.

“ I spoke to you yesterday, my love, (said she), with a desire to hear your sentiments on a matter very important to you. You say that you sometimes accuse yourself of not having sufficient prevoyance—of looking forward with too little solicitude to a future, which certainly promises
but

but little prosperity.—What, if a way was to offer of escaping from these fears?—If an establishment in most respects unexceptionable were to be found?”

“ I am not my own mistress, you know, my dear Madam,” said Rosalie, speaking this equivocation, for it could not be called a falsehood, in so low a voice as hardly to be heard.

“ That is true, (answered Mrs. Vyvian); but I think, indeed I am *sure*, your *friends* would not disapprove the proposal in question—indeed there can be one objection to it, which I think would not have much weight; the gentleman is a Catholic.”

“ A Catholic !” repeated Rosalie faintly.

“ You are surprised, I see; but you know, Rosalie, there *are* considerations that may influence persons to overlook this difference of opinion. Tell me now ingenuously: *should* a man of that religion offer, whose circumstances, whose character, are such as would preclude all those fears that you, or those who love

you, might have as to your future fate?—Tell me, if you should hesitate to accept of his hand?—Remember I expect you to be candid——Would you receive such a man as your husband?”

The first attempt Rosalie made to answer this question failed, she was unable to articulate a syllable; collecting, however, all her resolution, she at last found courage to say, “ I am very sensible, Madam, that I ought to feel extremely grateful for the notice of any man of whom you have a good opinion;—but—my dear, dear benefactress, (added she in a voice that her agitation rendered indistinct, and rising from her seat), I cannot any longer conceal the truth from you—*I am already married.*”

“ Already married! (exclaimed Mrs. Vyvian with a tone and look of amazement);——Already married!—Merciful Heaven! and to whom?”

“ Can I hope, dearest and best of women, to be forgiven, when I tell you—O no!—I dare not—you will reproach me,

me, perhaps detest me, and cast me off for ever."

"Speak, (said Mrs. Vyvian, trembling as much as the unhappy girl)—speak"... She had her fists in her hands, and her eyes were eagerly fixed on the face of Rosalie, who was compelled to support herself by holding the table.

"Since you have just said, Madam, that a Catholic might, in your opinion, make such an alliance." -----

"A Catholic!" cried Mrs. Vyvian, still more faintly.

"I might hope, perhaps, (continued Rosalie), to be forgiven for every thing, but the presumption of becoming part of your family—of marrying a very near relation of your own."

Rosalie might have continued her confession without interruption another hour, Mrs. Vyvian heard no more, but sunk back in her chair to all appearance lifeless.

In an agony of terror, to which no words can do justice, Rosalie flew to-

wards her, then to the bell, which she rang with violence, and when her servants came, she assisted in carrying Mrs. Vyvian to her room, though she was herself in a situation but little better.
 “ I am undone, (said she)—I shall never be forgiven. No, I see that my more than mother cannot, will not, forgive me.—O Montalbert ! why are you not here to plead with me for pardon ?—What will become of your unhappy Rosalie, if her first, her best friend abandons and abhors her, while you are far far off, and unable to protect her from the insults of the rest of the world ? ”

While Rosalie was making this mournful monologue on one side of the bed, the applications used by Mrs. Vyvian's woman were so successful, that she opened her eyes ; but, turning them on Rosalie, she seemed shocked by the sight of her, and, without speaking, waved her hand that she might leave her.

This was too much. Rosalie, regardless of the presence of the servant, threw herself

fell upon her knees by the bed side, and attempted to take Mrs. Vyvian's hand—she snatched it from her with abhorrence, and, speaking with great difficulty, said, “Wretched, most wretched girl—if you would not see me die before your face—go—I conjure you go.”

“Hear me but for one moment; let Hallam leave the room while I speak to you for the last time, if it must be so.”

The maid, who understood nothing of all this, and who felt no curiosity to know what it meant, restrained by some degree of terror, retired without being bid; and Rosalie again most earnestly imploring for pity and pardon, Mrs. Vyvian, in a voice at once shrill and plaintive, said——

“It is now I feel, in all its severity, the punishment I have deserved: long has the dread of it pursued me—long has it embittered every moment of my wretched existence—but at length it overtakes;

it crushes, it destroys me. . . . Miserable girl!—the unfortunate young man, to whom you believe yourself married—is—gracious God!—do I live to tell it—is your brother!”

“ My brother!—(cried Rosalie)—Heaven defend me!—My dear Madam—Mrs. Vyvian!—” Nothing occurred to her at that moment, but that the senses of her friend were gone.

“ You are my daughter, (said Mrs. Vyvian), the unhappy child of an unfortunate man, whose very name I never suffer to escape my lips.”

This confirmed Rosalie in the apprehensions that her mind was deranged; but, heart struck with horror, she could not speak. Mrs. Vyvian, after a short pause, proceeded——

“ Destined from your birth to be an outcast—to appear a stranger even to your mother—I guiltily indulged myself with a sight of you, till Vyvian, my son, victim of *my* crimes———”

“ Vyvian!

“ Vyvian! (cried Rosalie, not knowing what to believe)—it is not Vyvian, but Montalbert, who is my husband.”

“ Montalbert!—and am I not then the wretch I thought myself?—O Heaven! hast thou yet mercy upon me!”

“ If dearest, dearest Mrs. Vyvian, you would but listen calmly to me - - - - -”
 Terror, for still she apprehended that Mrs. Vyvian was become insane, again prevented her proceeding; nor was this impression weakened by the solemnity with which she now spoke.

“ Yes, Rosalie, (said she), you are my child—I am not mad—I am only miserable—yet not so very miserable as I thought I was. Oh! why have so many cruel people been endeavouring to embitter the sad hours of my unhappy life, by repeating to me continually that Vyvian was so strongly attached to you, that neither reason nor absence could cure him of his passion. They knew not that
 in

in raising this idea in my mind, they poured into my heart the most fatal poison.—Alas! they knew not that the dread of this horrible crime drove from me my Rosalie—the dear, unhappy object of so many years of silent anguish and stifled solicitude.”

Rosalie, more and more amazed, and doubting the evidence of her senses, could only listen in breathless wonder, while Mrs. Vyvian, whose heart seemed to be already relieved, proceeded——

“ Montalbert then is your husband. . . . Ah! my poor girl, what a store of future misery you have laid up, it is too probable, for yourself. I am now amazed at my own blindness. Many, many hours of the most cruel anxiety would have been spared me, had not so strong a prepossession been given me of Charles’s frantic passion for you: yet I now wonder I did not discover that it was Montalbert you loved—that you were attached to somebody I was sure, and when I thought
it

it was to Charles——oh! no words can do justice to the tortures that wrung my soul.”

Rosalie sighed deeply; but not knowing what to say that should express the mingled emotions she felt, she remained silent, still holding the hand of Mrs. Vyvian, who seemed to be collecting some of the presence of mind her late terrors had so entirely dissipated.

The pause had something of horror in it. Rosalie watched her countenance with a fearful and anxious eye, still assailed by the idea of some temporary derangement of intellect: For how could she, whose parents were never even doubted, be the daughter of Mrs. Vyvian?—The whole scene appeared to be a dream, and, during this silence, Rosalie apprehended that she should again see her relapse into phrenzy. Till these fears gradually subsided, as Mrs. Vyvian began with some degree of calmness to inquire into the particulars of the marriage; it was
legally

legally and properly celebrated according to all her ideas.

“ But tell me, (added she, when this inquiry was at an end)—was Montalbert ingenuous with you?—Did he tell you that he depends for every thing, but a bare subsistence, on the bounty of his mother?—Did he tell you, that mother has prejudices the most unconquerable against the natives and the established religion of England? Ah! my poor dear girl, the same softness of heart that destroyed *me*, has been, I fear, most dangerous to you. I cannot, (continued she, deeply sighing), I cannot now tell you the sad particulars of your birth I have not strength either of mind or body—the horrible idea, that my unhappy, perhaps guilty, attachment would be punished by a yet more fatal one between my children, was so very terrible, that it could not be sustained.—I tremble still like a wretch, who having seen himself on the brink of a precipice
into

into which he must inevitably fall, is snatched from it as it were by miracle, and can hardly believe his safety. Let it suffice, my dearest love, for the present, to tell you, that there are the most material reasons why you should conceal, even from Mrs. Lessington, this unexpected explanation between us—let her not know, I conjure you, what has happened; but let her, at least for a while, suppose the secret known only to her and to me. I need not tell you, that your future welfare, and that of my nephew, depend entirely on your still keeping secret this clandestine engagement. There are events that may obviate the inconveniencies I foresee.—Ah, Rosalie! from an affection cherished in secret, arose the misfortunes that have embittered my life, and fearful to my imagination is any dissimulation; but I dare not speak farther now—I am unequal to it: already there is too much reason to fear that the violence of our
emotions

emotions may have given rise to conjectures, which it is so necessary for us to flifle. Let what has happened be supposed to arise from indisposition on my part, and on yours from the fears that indisposition occasioned; and try, my best love, to recover yourself as much as you can, and to resume your usual composure."

Rosalie, still in astonishment at all she had heard, and surprized at the tranquillity with which Mrs. Vyvian now spoke, obeyed her as well as she could; but, as she kissed her hand, and would have bade her adieu, the new sensations she felt, while she considered as her mother the friend whom she had always so tenderly loved, quite overcame her spirits, and her tears blinded her. Mrs. Vyvian, yielding for a moment to the tenderness she had for so many years suppressed, clasped her daughter fondly to her bosom, and, for almost the first time in her life, called her by the dear
name

name of her child. There was some danger that they would both have indulged too long in these effusions of natural affection, but a rap at the chamber-door compelled them hastily to recover themselves. It was a message from the venerable Mr. Hayward, who, returning from his morning walk, had heard of Mrs. Vyvian's being greatly indisposed, and now solicited leave to inquire after her. Rosalie, therefore, who knew that for every wound of the mind Mrs. Vyvian found a resource in the spiritual consolation offered her by this excellent man, hastened to follow her wishes as to leaving her, and remaining only a few moments in another room to recover herself yet a little more, she left the house of her real, and returned to that of her supposed mother.

Nothing could be less in harmony with her feelings than the group she found assembled there. A large party from the city, some of whom were entirely unknown to her, had been on a jaunt of pleasure

pleasure to a village about ten miles distant, and, on their way back to London, had been engaged by Miss Lessington, who was one of the company, to dine and pass the rest of the day at her mother's house at Hampstead.

Some of the gentlemen, who seemed to be of that rank of beings who are called "*City Bucks—Young Men of Spirit—Fine Flashy Fellows*"—were, in Rosalie's opinion, the rudest and most insupportable set she had ever yet seen: agitated almost beyond endurance, as her spirits were, she was yet under the mortifying necessity of remaining for some time in this company, which did not separate till one of the men proposed finishing their pleasurable party by a jaunt to Ranelagh: it was now early spring, and it was not without difficulty that she was at length allowed to decline going, and saw Miss Lessington and this group of good folks, 'so perfectly contented with themselves, depart without her.

She

She was then left alone with her supposed mother ; but to conceal from her the perturbation of her mind was by no means difficult. Mrs. Lessington, whose new manner of life was much more pleasing to her than that she had lived in, the uniform insipidity of a country village, retained, however, so much of her original notable œconomy, as to use every hour to advantage which was not given to the vigils of the card table ; she now, therefore, busily employed herself in domestic arrangements, that she might enjoy with higher relish the rubber of the evening ; and she had, therefore, no time to make observations on the appearance of Rosalie.

Thus left to herself, she reviewed with astonishment the strange discovery of the day ; to find herself the daughter of Mrs. Vyvian, though of her father she was yet ignorant, seemed to be knowledge more flattering, more elevating than any event that could be imagined.—She was now ready to account for a thousand things

which had before seemed extraordinary. The little affection Mr. Lessington had ever shewn for her; his leaving her name entirely out of his will; the indifference of Mrs. Lessington, who sometimes, and particularly lately, had seemed to forget her assumed character of mother, and to express only what she felt, the cold civility of a common acquaintance; the want of even the slightest family resemblance between her and the other children of the family, and innumerable other circumstances which now crowded together upon her recollection. But if on one hand she now saw only strangers among those whom she had hitherto considered as her nearest relations, she beheld in Mrs. Vyvian a mother whom her heart bounded to acknowledge. To be her daughter, to be with her knowledge the wife of Montalbert, left her hardly any thing to wish, but that the hour was come when she might claim at least the latter title, and be received as belonging to a man, who had not disdained to give her that title

when

when he thought her Rosalie Leffington, and knew not that she inherited a portion of the noble blood of the Montalbert family: a family which, though now debarred from farther elevation by differing from the established religion, and estranged by foreign connections, had not formerly been inferior, either in antiquity or honour, to the most illustrious of the British nobility.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



